the weekly Standard

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THE RISE OF ANTI-ANTI-ISLAMISM
SAM SCHULMAN • LEE SMITH

The American Narcissus

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

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Contents

November 22, 2010 • Volume 16, Number 10

2 The Scrapbook — *Revolting students, celebrating Conquest, & more*

5 Casual — *Christopher Caldwell's nightmare cab ride*

6 Editorials — *Roadmap Rules • 'What About Compliments?' • Defend Defense*

Articles

9 Speaking Truth to Mullah Power — BY TOD LINDBERG
At a conclave of big shots, Lindsey Graham steals the show

11 Crimson Tide — BY FRED BARNES
Alabama goes very, very red

12 I Think We Lost the Election — BY P.J. O'ROURKE
How about politics without politicians?

14 Anti-Anti-Islamism — BY LEE SMITH
A political tendency is born

16 The Other 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' — BY CHERYL MILLER
Why won't the Pentagon stand up for ROTC?

18 Lend Me Your Earmarks — BY KENNETH Y. TOMLINSON
It's now or never for Republicans

22 No Camelot 2.0 — BY JAMES PIERESON
The decline of liberal idealism

Features

23 American Narcissus — BY JONATHAN V. LAST
The vanity of Barack Obama

27 Pretentiousness Kills — BY SAM SCHULMAN
Lessons from the corrupt prosecution of Geert Wilders

Books & Arts

30 Norman's Conquest — BY DOUGLAS MURRAY
How Norman Podhoretz made it

32 Only Yesterday — BY PHILIP TERZIAN
A president remembers what some have forgotten

33 Hurricane Eleanor — BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN
The lives and loves of a medieval matriarch

36 God in the Details — BY BARTON SWAIM
Why disbelieving doesn't always make it so

37 The Tehran Syndrome — BY SOHRAB AHMARI
What happens when a mind is held hostage by the imams

38 Ghost's Story — BY MICHAEL J. BIRKNER
. . . And the Pulitzer Prize for biography goes to Theodore Sorensen!

40 Parody — *A new SBARRO opens*

COVER BY GARY LOCKE

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Revolting Students

The sweeping Republican victories in the midterm elections have yielded the customary progressive analysis: Americans are not just fearful and irrational, they are angry and downright dangerous as well. And as everybody knows, when non-progressives get mad—when they suffer a mass temper tantrum, or vote their hatreds, or lash out against some unidentified "other"—the long dark night of national shame ensues. Already, responsible observers, recognized experts, and prominent newspaper columnists are publicly worried about being targeted by right-wing crazies, whipped into an ideological frenzy by the fire-breathing rhetoric of Fox News, Rep. Michele Bachmann, or the *Wall Street Journal* (take your pick).

The trouble with this scenario is that it is not only patently untrue, but it has never been true. Yes, The Scrapbook is aware that the Oklahoma City bomber, Timothy McVeigh, harbored grievances against the federal government; and to some progressive minds, the pro-life movement is indistinguishable from the handful of terrorists who have attacked abortion clinics or shot physicians. But the sad truth is that most political violence in the United States—from the campus bombings, burnings, and killings of the 1960s and '70s to the European-style rioting at IMF/World Bank meetings—has its origins on the left. Lest we forget, the man who shot John F. Kennedy was a committed Marxist and an officer of his local chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. The man who shot Robert Kennedy was a Palestinian exile who targeted Kennedy because of his support for Israel.

This basic fact of modern political life is nowhere more evident at the moment than in Europe. Two countries are enduring political violence at the moment—France and Great Britain—and it is not being perpetrated by conservatives, free-marketers, or supporters of the war on terror. In France, students and labor unions have sought to shut down the country and paralyze Paris because the center-right Sarkozy government has proposed to raise the French retirement age from 60 to 62. And London was the scene last week of a mob attack on an office block that contains the headquarters of the Conservative party. The grievance? A government proposal to lower teaching budgets as part of its austerity program, and to raise tuition fees for university students to about $14,000 per year.

Extracurricular activities: Students storm London.

The student march in London was largely peaceful and, we are told, not intended to be violent. But a radical element within the company of marchers was determined to be violent—and were they ever: The glass front of the Millbank Tower was shattered, hundreds of rioters swarmed into the building, vandalized the interior, and held sway on the roof, dropping heavy projectiles onto a knot of outnumbered policemen. The rioters, in the aftermath, were pleased with what they had accomplished: Government policies justify violence, several explained, and one Cambridge undergraduate commented that since nobody had been killed, and only property was stolen or destroyed, no real harm was done.

Let us hope that this will concentrate minds on the left in Britain—and perhaps in France—and cause them to worry less about their democratically elected governments' attempts to put their fiscal house in order and more about what's brewing within their own ranks. And the same goes for their progressive brethren in America. ♦

Lost in Translation

Last week the *Washington Post* reported that 17 Northern Virginia residents "had excitedly prepared for the hajj, the pilgrimage that is sacred to devout Muslims," by hiring a California travel agency to arrange their tickets and get visas for their passports. The package, however, scheduled for overnight delivery to the Dar AlNoor mosque in Manassas, never arrived. It turned out that it wasn't lost, as UPS initially claimed, but had been seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. "We cooperate with government agencies on security matters," explained a UPS spokesman. Given the recently thwarted terrorist plot originating in Yemen and targeting Chicago synagogues that had sought to use UPS and Federal Express as delivery mechanisms for explosive devices, it

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is hardly surprising that express mail services are on a higher state of alert.

While some observers, like CAIR spokesman Ibrahim Hooper, wondered if this wasn't an instance where authorities had profiled Muslims, it is worth remembering that after the Yemen plot the FBI warned that American mosques, as well as synagogues and churches, were possible targets.

At any rate, the package eventually reached its intended destination, but only after "all but one of the travelers had missed their flight." At this point, the customs agency again intervened, this time to buy $34,000 worth of replacement tickets to ensure the Northern Virginians got to Mecca in time for the hajj.

It is obvious why this emotional rollercoaster of a story would be of interest to a Muslim majority audience in a place like Egypt, where it was picked up by the website *Al-Youm al-Sabaa*—which strangely forgot to translate the happy ending. Instead, the headline read: "Enmity to Islam prevents 17 Americans from the hajj."

The ensuing readers' comments appended to the story were predictable. "Where are the rights of Muslims in America?" Others were more lamentable: "UPS is a Jewish company and the principal container with all the letters and packages of the Arabs is in Tel Aviv."

It's not clear why a news organization, especially one like *Al-Youm al-Sabaa* that describes itself as liberal, would change the entire point of a feel-good story about the United States and Islam, but it does not augur well for soft power. ♦

Happy Birthday, 'City Journal'

A tip of The Scrapbook's homburg to our friends at the Manhattan Institute, whose handsome and influential quarterly, *City Journal*, is celebrating its 20th anniversary this week.

City Journal is perhaps best known for having done the intellectual spadework that enabled Mayor Rudy Giuliani's successful reclamation of a great American metropolis. More than that, the journal came along at a time when the idea of city life had become synonymous with crime, homelessness, rioting, and decay to insist that through creative policy making, courageous political leadership, and sound governance our cities could again become cradles of civilization and urbanity.

For that and much amusement and edification along the way, we congratulate editor Brian C. Anderson, his predecessor Myron Magnet, and the many talented writers who have graced the pages of *City Journal*. Check them out, if you don't already subscribe, at www.city-journal.org, and raise a glass to their next 20 years. ♦

Celebrating Conquest

The Scrapbook is glad to report that Robert Conquest, the heroic poet, diplomat, and historian who now works at the Hoover Institution, has been awarded the 2010 Truman-Reagan Medal by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. Conquest's books on

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the crimes of Soviet Communism remain authoritative: *The Nation Killers* (about Stalin's ethnic cleansing), *The Harvest of Sorrow* (about Stalin's war on his own peasantry in the early 1930s), and *The Great Terror* (about Stalin's purges and show trials).

Conquest is also an underrated poet and an underrated aphorist. (Conquest's First Law: "Everybody is reactionary on subjects he knows about.") It is worth remembering that even his magisterial histories were long underrated, too. They were ignored. They were sneered at as exaggerations by some of Conquest's less informed fellow-traveling colleagues.

According to Conquest's friend, the late novelist Kingsley Amis, shortly after the Berlin Wall fell, one of Conquest's editors suggested bringing out a new edition of *The Great Terror*, although he confessed to being uneasy about the title and asked Conquest if he would consider changing it.

"Well, perhaps *I Told You So, You F—ing Fools*," Conquest replied. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'Other than perhaps the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee, there were few places as despondent on election night as the Manhattan offices of the *Nation*, the 146-year-old journal of fiery leftist opinion. A group of about 15 writers, editors and interns sat around a conference table and watched the results as they drowned their sorrows in bottles of Trader Joe's red wine. Even the friendly voices on MSNBC proved little solace . . . " (*New York Times*, November 8). ♦

Correction

A rueful thank you to the many sportsmen among our readers who wrote to point out that, luckily for Harry Whittington, Dick Cheney's .28-gauge shotgun was loaded with birdshot, not buckshot as we mistakenly wrote ("The Captain Ahabs of the *Washington Post*," October 16). ♦

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Appointment in Berlin

Not knowing how to say "Buzz off" in German, I consented when the taxi driver insisted I put my briefcase in the trunk. I was in a rush—I had a meeting at a government ministry. Almost from the moment the taxi began to move it was clear I had made a mistake.

It was a new-ish Mercedes, neat as a pin. Like every other Berlin taxi, it was a wan yellowy-beige. The upholstery was the same color. It would show any stain. Hence the cabbie's rule against my briefcase, which had been sitting on a puddly stretch of sidewalk when I hailed him.

I was less prepared than I wanted to be for my interview, so I'd intended to spend the taxi-ride going over my notes … but then I realized they were in the trunk, with my passport, my phone, my books, and anything else I could possibly fill up the time with. I thought of all the world-traveling bores back home who rattle on about how, "Ooh, the taxis are so much *better* in Europe. … Why, in Berlin, most of them are *Mercedes*!" How misguided this all was. Our system—where beginning drivers from Ethiopia and Sri Lanka tool around in repainted police cars from the late 1980s, with their broken shocks and squealing brakes—is better. You can bring what you want in the back seat, which usually features bulletproof glass, herniated upholstery with foam popping out, and Christmas-tree-shaped air fresheners swinging from the clothes hooks. If you're lucky, the last customer will have left something to eat.

I was already frustrated by the time I discovered my driver was not just a neatnik but also a psychopath. I should have remembered the passage from Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* in which Wright described J. Edgar Hoover's desk as being one of those tidy things that are the sign of a profoundly disordered mind. The first time my psycho driver shouted, "*Arschloch!*" (German for "@#$%^&!"), I looked around, wondering what he was yelling about. Psycho was staring at a guy on a motor-scooter who was weaving ahead through the traffic we were stuck in. He rolled down the window and shouted it again. About a hundred yards further on, once we'd started moving again, a car crossed into our lane. Psycho let off a barrage of long German words, half of which began with "*Scheiß-*," and pummeled the dashboard. Then he turned around to me. "The man is an *Arschloch*," he explained.

HAL MAYFORTH

This continued for another ten minutes. Almost nothing that you would encounter in an ordinary drive across a city in mid-afternoon failed to provoke a comment, from an unexpected red light to an old woman ("*verdammte Schlampe!*") skipping across the street ahead of traffic.

When I began to recognize that we were in the neighborhood of the ministry, I told him he could let me off anywhere, really, right up here at the corner would be fine, nice talkin' to you, have a good—

"Can't stop!" Psycho blurted. "Can't stop!" Apparently if he were to stop where his fare asked him to, some *Arschloch* might ding his car. He insisted on barreling down the road at high speed and veering sharply into the heavily barricaded main driveway of the ministry. We were stopped almost immediately by two policemen at an antiterrorism barrier.

Sometimes you approach a government building and realize that if you are, say, President Obama or Chancellor Merkel, you can proceed, but that otherwise this is the point where you show them your passport, start calling everyone "Sir," and tell them your business.

I gave the police my name and hopped out of the taxi. I paid Psycho and asked him to pop the trunk. I recovered my briefcase and headed for the pedestrian entrance on foot. I was through with the guy.

But the gendarmes weren't. They told him to back out of the driveway. Maybe he was under the impression that he had just dropped off a person of too high a rank to allow him to submit to such an indignity. He had a better idea: He would pass through the antiterrorism barriers, swing in front of the main steps, and exit two hundred yards down the street.

I was almost out of earshot, but got the gist. The cops kept saying "*Nein*" and Psycho kept saying "*Arschloch*." When I took a last look around before going in the door of the ministry, he was bent, red-faced, over some intercom box with his hands cupped in front of his mouth, shouting imprecations at someone inside the building.

I approached the guard who was sitting at reception. His eyes didn't leave me as I walked across the lobby. I handed him my passport, told him the name of the person I was looking for, mentioned his extension, and said, "He knows I'm coming."

"I daresay he does," the guard said.

Christopher Caldwell

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Roadmap Rules

The calls were unexpected. Early in 2010, Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, the ranking Republican on the House Budget Committee, began receiving requests for information about the Roadmap for America's Future, his ambitious plan to reform entitlements, taxes, and spending. Ryan, a Republican star, is no stranger to press inquiries. But these were coming from an unexpected source: Republican candidates for Congress who were looking for solutions—any solutions—to America's fiscal crisis. Ryan estimates that he sent about 100 copies of the Roadmap to interested candidates. "We didn't plan that," he says.

Nor did Ryan fully anticipate the left's ferocious response to his suggestions. Almost as soon as the updated Roadmap was unveiled in January—the original version was released in 2008—Democrats and liberals pounced. The fusillade was aimed at the Roadmap's most controversial aspect: an overhaul of entitlements for Americans under 55 years old that would introduce means-testing and optional personal accounts into Social Security, and transform Medicare into a defined-contribution voucher program. Ignoring the facts, Democrats tried to play the senior card, suggesting to anyone who'd listen that the Roadmap would "privatize" Social Security and "shred" the safety net. President Obama, Speaker Pelosi, House Democratic campaign chairman Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, dozens of Democratic incumbents, legions of liberal talking heads—they all claimed the Roadmap would hurt seniors. Paul Krugman of the *New York Times* went so far as to call Ryan "the flimflam man" and his good-faith proposal a "fraud."

Democrats were convinced that these scare tactics would work to their advantage. Congressman Van Hollen told *Time* magazine that the Roadmap was "a gift" and that "we're going to spend a lot of time talking about how we'll be fighting to protect Social Security and Medicare." California Democrat Mike Honda said at a press conference, "You do this, you mess with my mother." One *Huffington Post* blogger was so excited he couldn't decide whether the Roadmap would serve as "political Kryptonite" or a "silver bullet to move" seniors into the Democratic column.

Ryan, moreover, was no longer the sole target of the attacks. Any Republican who had endorsed the Roadmap, spoken kindly of Ryan, voiced support for his ideas, or raised the possibility of entitlement reform found himself under assault. The list included Senate candidates Dan Coats in Indiana, Pat Toomey in Pennsylvania, Ron Johnson in Wisconsin, and Marco Rubio in Florida, where seniors made up 35 percent of the 2010 electorate.

They all won, of course. As did House candidates Bob Dold in Illinois, Michael Grimm in New York, Kristi Noem in South Dakota, Dan Benishek in Michigan, Joe Heck in Nevada, and Sean Duffy in Wisconsin. The Democratic campaign to tar them with Paul Ryan's Roadmap—"As if I was linked to some evil force," says Senator-elect Coats—failed spectacularly. Not only did it fail, the share of seniors nationwide who voted Republican jumped from 48 percent in 2008 to a whopping 58 percent in 2010. Now Ryan is preparing to take over the Budget Committee in the next Congress. The Roadmap wasn't a hindrance. It may even have been an advantage.

Ryan says the 2010 elections proved that entitlement reform is "not the third rail it's supposed to be." Coats adds that "the American people have grown politically these last two years." If they are right, then maybe, just maybe, the country is ready to have a serious debate over the future of the American welfare state. It's about time.

At least five conditions have changed since the last major push for reform, President Bush's failed overhaul of Social Security in 2005. The most obvious is that Bush is no longer president. More important, however, is the fact that the financial crisis, the Great Recession, and Obama's big spending have created huge deficits and exposed the gaping, bottomless pit of America's unfunded liabilities. Meanwhile, a triumvirate of Republican governors—Mitch Daniels of Indiana, Bob

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McDonnell of Virginia, and Chris Christie of New Jersey—have proven that a serious approach to fiscal responsibility is not only the right thing to do and brings positive, real-world outcomes, but can be politically popular as well. The fourth difference is the rise of the Tea Party movement. The ranks of incoming Republican congressmen will be filled with real believers in reining in deficit spending and limiting government's growth.

The decisive factor, however, may have been the passage of Obamacare. At first blush, this might appear to be a contradiction. After all, wasn't Obamacare sold (speciously) as a way to cut the deficit? And haven't Republicans attacked (reasonably) the law's tax hikes and Medicare cuts? All true. Yet the law also made clear the Democratic approach to entitlements: Cut programs for seniors not to save money, but to spend on whole new programs. And don't change the architecture of these programs to create savings in the future, but cut indiscriminately into the benefits that seniors receive here and now. Obamacare, Ryan says, "wasn't an exercise in making Medicare solvent." It's an exercise in expansive government—and the public rejects it.

What Obamacare did, quite accidentally, was fashion a political coalition of seniors and independents and conservatives who are more open to commonsense changes in the American welfare state than one might otherwise imagine. Grandma and Grandpa are able to distinguish between laws that kick them off Medicare Advantage and proposals that preserve their benefits while putting Medicare on a sustainable footing for the future. Joe Sixpack understands who is serious about spending and deficits and who is not. And Paul Ryan's vision for an America that provides a safety net for those who need it the most, while encouraging personal responsibility and opportunity among the able-bodied, is a step closer to reality.

—Matthew Continetti

'What About Compliments?'

At his November 12 press conference in Seoul, President Obama was asked the following question by CBS's Chip Reid: "What was the number-one complaint, concern, or piece of advice that you got from foreign leaders about the U.S. economy and your stewardship of the economy?"

Whereupon the president began his response with a complaint: "What about compliments?" he asked. "You didn't put that in the list."

Well, soorrrrry, Mr. President.

Poor President Obama. He's (allegedly) getting all these compliments from his fellow world leaders—and the press just isn't interested in having him tell us about them. True, President Obama became accustomed, as a candidate, to having a compliant press corps. But even so. After a contentious economic summit where the president was forced to defend the Fed's ill-advised monetary policies, a summit that followed on the heels of the biggest midterm electoral defeat ever suffered by an elected first-term president, a defeat partly due to his ill-advised fiscal policies, did Obama really expect a reporter to stand up at the end of last week and ask, "Mr. President, what compliments did you receive from foreign leaders?"

That is, apparently, exactly what the president expected.

And that has us worried. We've assumed the president would learn from the voters' repudiation of his party on November 2. We've assumed he would learn from reality's refutation of his policies over the last two years. But the vanity that Jonathan V. Last elaborates on elsewhere in this issue seems to be standing in the way of such learning. President Obama has been mugged both by the voters and by reality—but he thinks that he's still looking good, that he deserves plaudits, and that the only problem is people don't know about all the compliments he's been getting.

It may be true, as Mark Twain observed, that "an occasional compliment is necessary to keep up one's self-respect." So let's hope the compliments the president claims he was getting from his fellow leaders have done the job of bolstering his self-respect. Perhaps now he can get on with doing what's right for the country.

It's not that hard. The president can compromise with Republicans in Congress to extend current tax rates for the next few years, which would give the economy a boost. He can—with the support of most economists—urge the Fed to stop the quantitative easing before we really destroy the role of the U.S. dollar as a reserve currency. He can engage in a healthy competition with the Republican House in cutting unnecessary domestic discretionary spending. He can stand up to the false and dangerous allure of cutting defense when our military is stretched thin, and when our defense R&D and procurement are underfunded. As commander in chief, he can—with Republican support—lead us to success in Afghanistan.

All the president has to do is abandon some foolish ideological presuppositions, get down to work, and stop fishing for compliments. If he did so, he'd end up getting

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genuine compliments—from us and, we dare say, from the American people. And then his self-respect would have a firmer ground than vanity.

—William Kristol

Defend Defense

Do conservatives want a smaller and better government than we now have—properly limited and governed by the rule of law, but also energetically capable of accomplishing its appropriate ends? Or do conservatives just want to cut government willy-nilly, not only reducing its overall size but endangering its ability to carry out its proper functions?

Some on the anti-all-government right are salivating at the chance, as the Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) puts it, to slay the "sacred cow" of Pentagon budgets. Meanwhile, the Democratic left, in the person of Barney Frank, is more than willing to engage in such "scrutiny," and is now rallying behind the proposal of Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson, the heads of President Obama's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, to cut more than $100 billion in "excess" military spending. And the media, of course, are all agog at the possibility of a "bipartisan" consensus on ending the supposedly profligate ways of the Pentagon.

There's only one thing wrong with this alleged consensus: Its facts are wrong, and there's no real consensus.

The fact is, Simpson and Bowles are outliers even on their own panel. Knowing that few of the other members of the commission would go along with their ideas, the co-chairs announced their proposals on their own. They had good reason to do so. Much of what they offer up makes little sense. As Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute has noted, the proposals "bespeak a broader ignorance of military plans and technology."

Consider just one example. Bowles and Simpson suggest terminating the procurement of the vertical take-off-and-landing version of the Joint Strike Fighter, along with the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV). They also want to end early the buy of V-22 Osprey "tilt-rotor" aircraft. But such moves would gut the capabilities of the U.S. Marine Corps. The "B" variant of the F-35 (a replacement for the old Harrier jump-jet), the EFV (a new amphibious assault vehicle), and the Osprey all provide troop transport. Without these systems, the Marines will have very little organic firepower and mobility; they'll be simply sea-based light infantry. The commission chairmen, therefore, suggest the Marines substitute mortars and guided missiles. But in that case the Marines would still lack the ability to conduct the kind of independent campaigns they waged in Operation Desert Storm or in the 2003 march to Baghdad.

Such is the consequence of a salami-slicing approach to defense spending. Bowles and Simpson also recommend a 15 percent cut in Pentagon procurement accounts. But Defense Secretary Robert Gates has already cut $330 billion in planned weapons spending in the last year alone, killing the Air Force's frontline F-22 fighter, the Navy's program for a new destroyer, and the Army's plan for a family of new combat vehicles.

Before taking a further hatchet to defense, maybe Congress might try making a more serious effort to reverse the huge increases in domestic spending put in place by the Obama team?

What really ties ATR, Barney Frank, Erksine Bowles, and Alan Simpson together is not a desire to see the Pentagon spend its money in the most efficient way possible. No, what ultimately drives their push for defense cuts is the idea of, in Bowles and Simpson's phrase, "rethinking our 21st century global role." This is shorthand for a reduced American role in the world. What the libertarian right and liberal left want, in other words, is nothing short of a reversal in America's six-decade-long strategic posture.

America certainly faces a budget crisis. And to the degree that economies can be found in the Pentagon budget, they ought to be found. But people should not kid themselves: Proposals for treating defense as if it were on an equal footing with the Department of Education are not about getting America's fiscal house in order. They are back door efforts to reduce America's global leadership role. That's a debate conservatives should welcome, and an outcome conservatives should defeat. But conservatives must insist on an honest and open debate, and not allow a phony "consensus" to be proclaimed that would make our troops fighting overseas, and our future security, indirect casualties of drive-by budget cutters.

—Thomas Donnelly and Gary Schmitt

AP IMAGES

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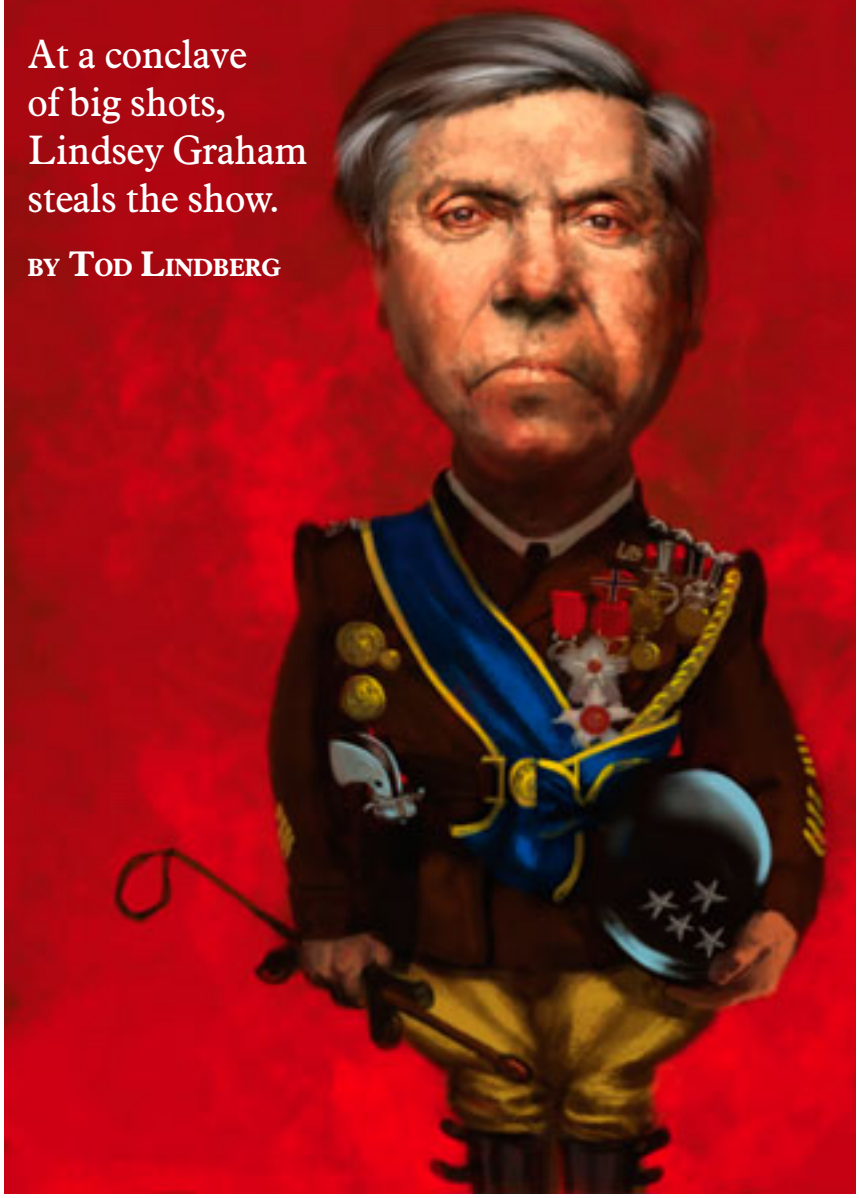
Speaking Truth to Mullah Power

At a conclave of big shots, Lindsey Graham steals the show.

BY TOD LINDBERG



THOMAS FLUHARTY

Halifax, Nova Scotia

On a dangerously windy early November afternoon, a military plane carrying a delegation of six U.S. senators made four successive approaches attempting to land at Halifax airport before giving up and turning around. Rather than heading for home, though, the plane landed in Bangor, Maine, where senators and staff overnighted before trying Halifax again, this time successfully, early the next morning.

There was, then, a certain determination in their effort to get to the Halifax International Security Forum, an annual gathering of mostly Western policymakers and security specialists spearheaded by the indefatigable Canadian defense minister Peter MacKay and the German Marshall Fund of the United States. No one said why the delegation was so determined. But to judge solely by the effect, maybe the answer was: because one of the senators, Republican Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, had a message he wanted to convey.

Asked about the effect of the GOP midterm victory on the Obama administration's foreign policy, the hawkish Graham said, "Republican ascendency is probably good news for those that want to see it through in Afghanistan and have a good relationship with Iraq." Then he added: "I think it's good news for the president if he wants to be bold on Iran. . . . I can tell you this. If he decides to be tough on Iran beyond sanctions, I think you're going to see a lot of Republican support for the idea that we cannot let Iran develop a nuclear weapon."

Tough beyond sanctions. What are the Americans thinking? A journalist from the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, who described himself facetiously as a "European wimp," asked exactly that.

Graham was happy to elaborate:

> Nobody would like to see the sanctions work any more than I would because I'm still in the military [Graham is a colonel in the Air Force reserves who has served active duty during Senate breaks in Iraq and Afghanistan] and I get to meet these young men and women on a regular basis, and I know what it's been like for the last nine years. So the last thing America needs is another military conflict. But the last thing the world needs is a nuclear-armed Iran. And if you use military force, if sanctions are not going to work and a year from now it's pretty clear they're not going to work, what do our friends in Israel do? So I would like the president to make it abundantly clear that all options are on the table. And we all know what that means.

Graham was just winding up:

Tod Lindberg, a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is a fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution and editor of* Policy Review.

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> And if that day ever came, my advice to the president, in open session here, if you take military action against Iran as the last effort to stop their nuclear ambitions, you do open up Pandora's box. But if you let them acquire nuclear weapons, you'll empty Pandora's box. So my view of military force would be not to just neutralize their nuclear program, which are probably dispersed and hardened, but to sink their navy, destroy their air force, and deliver a decisive blow to the Revolutionary Guard. In other words, neuter that regime. Destroy their ability to fight back and hope that people ... inside Iran would have a chance to take back their government and be good neighbors to the world in the future. So that's what I mean by being tough, sir, that everything is on the table and that we need to start talking more openly about that because time is not on our side.

Gulp. "Neutralize ... sink ... destroy ... neuter." The moderator, Susan Bonner of CBS News, rattled and apparently looking for a lifeline to haul her panel out of a George W. Bush-infested sea of rogue American militarism, turned to Graham's co-panelist, Senator Mark Udall of Colorado: "Senator Udall, the Democratic view on that issue? Neutering Iran." Udall was no help. "Most of the members of the Senate caucus agree that you keep all options on the table," he said. "The steps that Senator Graham has outlined are very significant, very serious, would have worldwide repercussions. I'm not willing to put my support behind that step here in a theoretical context, but I think you've got to keep every option on the table and let the Iranian regime know that we're deadly serious, not just as the United States of America, but as a world community."

The panel was nominally on the meaning of the 2010 elections, but the room had clearly moved on. The last question of the session went to the chairman of the Turkish parliament's foreign relations committee, Murat Mercan. Turkey, which has a 310-mile border with Iran, has recently been assiduously pursuing a "no problems with neighbors" policy that has caused serious indigestion in Washington, most notably over the May initiative of Turkey and Brazil to cut a nuclear deal with Iran intended to undercut support for tougher U.N. sanctions. A clearly troubled Mercan, who said he would soon be visiting Iran, wanted to know, "if the allies have to resort to the last option," whether they had thought through the regional implications.

Iran's Ali Khamenei reviews his troops.

Graham didn't flinch:

> If I thought containment would work, I wouldn't be saying the things I'm saying. So you've got two evils to choose from, I guess. And the evil that comes from the nuclear-armed Iran will affect the world as we know it far greater than whatever conflict would arise if you had to use military force. So at the end of the day, when you go to Iran, please convince them, if you can, that our country—the world at large—does not want this conflict, but that the regime has no credibility in my eyes. I think they're duplicitous. I think they're murdering their own people. I think they do not represent the hopeful nature of mankind. And if they acquire a nuclear weapon, they do so at their own peril because now's the time to stand up before it's too late.

Then came an ominously folksy admonition: "As to Turkey, I want to come to your country. I can't figure where y'all are going. Y'all are a great ally. I'm worried about your position with Israel. I don't know what's going on in Turkey. I know you're a member of NATO. I hope you get in the European Union. But you have a chance, my friend, to be a real force for the good. Don't let it pass."

All in all, Graham's performance was a tour de force. First, it was a bucket of cold water in the face of anyone harboring the impression that the United States would drift without comment toward eventual acceptance of an Iranian bomb.

But Graham also seems to have calibrated his message for multiple audiences. For President Obama, it was a sincere promise of support for military action if the Iranian government persists in its nuclear quest, as well as a warning that he must take his own policy and rhetoric seriously: Iran can't have the bomb. For the Iranians, the message was that a harder line would be coming out of the United States following the November elections, a point Udall reinforced with his affirmation of keeping "every option on the table." For Europeans and other allies, not least Turkey, Graham offered a display of bellicosity that would on one hand trouble them greatly, and on the other, remind them that if they don't want an American attack, they must succeed with their efforts to persuade Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions. For Republicans, Graham delivered a rebuke to any isolationist tendencies that might be struggling to emerge among the newly elected GOP members of the Senate and House.

And for John McCain, who led the congressional delegation to Halifax, the message was that he has groomed in Lindsey Graham a thoughtful and worthy successor as the Senate's leading human rights- and democracy-oriented foreign policy hawk. ♦

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Crimson Tide

Alabama goes very, very red.

BY FRED BARNES

Birmingham

Jim Folsom Jr., the son of former governor "Kissin' Jim" Folsom, lost his job as lieutenant governor. He was the top Democratic elected official in Alabama. George Wallace Jr., only son of a famously outspoken Democratic governor who opposed racial integration and later ran for president, didn't make it to the general election. He ran for state treasurer, as a Republican no less, and lost badly in the June primary.

To say the politics of Alabama have changed doesn't quite capture it. The wildest dreams of Republicans have come true. They won everything in the November 2 elections: all statewide offices from top to bottom, both houses of the legislature for the first time in 136 years, a U.S. Senate seat, and six of the state's seven U.S. House seats. The seventh is set aside under the Voting Rights Act as a majority-minority district and elected an African-American Democrat.

The reelection of Republican senator Richard Shelby was so widely accepted, he scarcely had to campaign to win his fifth term. The voters I talked to in Alabama last week couldn't even remember the name of his Democratic opponent. (For the record, it was William Barnes.) Shelby won by 30 percentage points.

Freddy Ard is the Republican chairman of Shelby County, a Birmingham suburb. When he moved there in 1979, Democrats held every office—state legislators, school board officials, county council members, judges. After the election, Republicans hold all 39 of them.

Alabamans have elected some Republican governors since the 1980s. And state representative Robert Bentley, a dermatologist in private life, defeated Democrat Ron Sparks, 58-42 percent, without breaking a sweat. Bentley's only struggle was in the Republican primary. He topped Bradley Byrne, the favorite of the business community and the Republican establishment, in a runoff.

The biggest Republican breakthrough was in the legislature, the heart of Democratic power in the state since Reconstruction. The turnaround was dramatic. The senate flipped from 20-to-15 Democratic to 22-to-12 Republican (1 independent). Republicans won 19 house seats, reversing a 60-to-43 Democratic lead (2 vacancies) and giving them a 62-to-43 advantage. Pretty impressive.

The Republican rout was all the more striking because Democrats in seemingly secure legislative seats were soundly beaten. In 2006, 6 of the Democrats who lost this year were unopposed and the other 13 won by an average of 25 percentage points. In the state senate, the losers had won four years ago by an average of 20 percentage points.

Northern Alabama, long influenced by the Tennessee Valley Authority, FDR, and unions, was a Democratic stronghold, with the emphasis on "was." On Election Day, it became a killing field. Democratic representative John Robinson told Challen Stephens of the *Huntsville Times* that survivors now "could all ride down [to the capital in Montgomery] in one car." Fifteen of the 19 Democratic losses in the state house were in northern Alabama.

Democratic powerhouses in the legislature suffered crushing defeats. House majority leader Ken Guin lost, 31-69 percent, to Republican Richard Baughn, a UPS truck driver. "Don't ever pick on a UPS driver," Baughn told a Republican gathering. Zeb Little, the Senate majority leader, was defeated by Paul Bussman, a dentist. Lowell Barron, the most powerful of the Democratic "big mules" in the state senate, lost to Shadrack McGill, who runs an auto parts and repairs business.

Democrat Betty Carol Graham, unopposed in 2006, was beaten by Mark Tuggle, who quit his job at Alabama Power to run against her. She'd been in the state house for 16 years and once headed the Alabama Education Association. The teachers' union is a bulwark of the Democratic party. "She did what [AEA boss] Paul Hubbert told her to do," Tuggle says. "People told me she'd been there too long." But no longer.

From top to bottom, the Republican campaign was unusually well organized. State chairman Mike Hubbard raised $5 million for the campaign. Republican candidates focused on three issues: cleaning up corruption in Montgomery, increasing jobs, and resisting encroachments by the federal government.

Republicans were also boosted by national issues and the unpopularity of President Obama. "A good year for Republicans nationally spilled into Alabama," says Michael New, a political science professor at the University of Alabama. One issue helped the most: Obama's health care program.

James Anderson, the Democratic candidate for attorney general, vowed to drop out of the lawsuit joined by more than 20 states against Obamacare. "I'm absolutely going to continue the lawsuit," Republican Luther Strange responded. "We're going to follow the Constitution." Strange won the race for attorney general handily.

Bobby Bright, a former mayor of Montgomery, is perhaps the most conservative Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives, but that

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didn't save him. He voted against the stimulus, cap and trade, and Obamacare. Late in the campaign, he announced he wouldn't vote for Nancy Pelosi for House speaker or Democratic leader.

Republican Martha Roby, a member of the Montgomery city council, insisted a conservative record wasn't sufficient. "It's just not enough to vote right," she said. You have to "fight for conservative values" in Washington.

Roby won narrowly, 51-49 percent. But with Republicans in charge of redistricting, they're sure to draw new lines that make her district more Republican. They're also certain to undo past Democratic gerrymandering and make state legislative districts more favorable.

The first clue that Democrats faced a Republican juggernaut in 2010 came in the June primaries. Republicans attracted 173,000 more votes in their primaries than Democrats in theirs. It was the first time in Alabama history that more people voted in the Republican primary.

Gary Palmer, the president of the conservative Alabama Policy Institute, took notice of this at the time. He wrote: "The fact that Democrats suffered a massive (31 percent) loss of primary voters while Republicans gained may indicate the beginnings of a political realignment." He couldn't have been more right. ♦

I Think We Lost the Election

How about politics without politicians?

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

I think we lost the election on November 2. Every race was won by a politician. True, we elected some angry nuts. These are preferable to common politicians. Their anger provokes honesty, and their mental illness prevents honesty from being obscured by charm. (What a loss Barney Frank would have been as an exemplar of the furious, insane left!) We also elected some amateur politicians. However, politics is like vivisection—disturbing as a career, alarming as a hobby. And we may have elected a few reluctant politicians. But not reluctant enough.

We will win an election when all the seats in the House and Senate and the chair behind the desk in the Oval Office and the whole bench of the Supreme Court are filled with people who wish they weren't there.

In a free country government is a dull and onerous responsibility. It is a parent-teacher conference. The teacher is a pompous twit. Our child is a lazy pain in the ass. We undertake this social obligation with weary reluctance. And we only do it at all because the teacher (political authority) deserves cold stares, hard questions, and maybe firing, and the pupil (that portion of society which, alas, needs governing) deserves to be grounded without TV and have its Internet access screened and its allowance docked.

America's elected and appointed officials ought to be longing to return to their personal lives and private interests. They should feel burdened by their powers, irked with their responsibilities, and embarrassed at their prominence in the public eye. When they say they want to spend more time with their families, they should mean it.

But how do we obtain this cadre of worthy citizens fidgeting unhappily in their honors and dignities? Given that politics is like war even more than it's like vivisection, we could draft them. In World War II this worked out well. Randomly selected young and fit members of the Greatest Generation performed their duties admirably. Then again, in Vietnam, with the members of the following Notsohotso Generation, this didn't work out well. Or, rather, it worked out well for the North Vietnamese.

Maybe we could use our state lotteries. These are popular. The big winner would get millions of dollars for picking the right member, and the big loser would get a Senate seat for picking the wrong one. But people who play the lottery aren't notable for their math skills. As Fran Lebowitz said, "The probability of winning the lottery is the same whether you buy a ticket or not." We face enormous federal debts and deficits. In Washington the innumerate are already in charge. Do we want more of them?

In fact we have the solution to our problem—and have had it for ages. A jury of our peers is the oldest institution of political liberty. Let us be governed by a jury. This isn't a quick or infallible fix. It took a couple of juries a number of years to put O.J. Simpson in jail. But juries work well enough to have endured since the Magna Carta. Political campaigns only seem to last that long.

Would juries be better than politicians? Would you rather confront a miscellaneous selection of your neighbors' dogs or a pack of Rottweilers bred for generations to attack freedom and guard privilege?

Jury members would be less experienced than the present occupants of office. But what experience that ordinary people haven't had is

P.J. O'Rourke, a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *is the author of a new book,* Don't Vote: It Just Encourages the Bastards *(Atlantic Monthly Press).*

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required to tell right from wrong? Is the experience of standing on street corners in fishnet stockings—metaphorically speaking (and literally speaking to you, Eliot Spitzer)—to be required?

Jurors would be ignorant about legislative and regulatory issues. And aren't we all. Who, exactly, in this Congress and White House has read all 906 pages of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act? Imagine a congressional hearing where the congressmen shut up and listened and actually wanted to learn something.

Certain individuals on juries would be naïve and easily suborned by special interests. They could turn out to be thieves. This has happened before in Washington. But who is more dangerous as a burglar—the thief who knows all about your valuables and where you keep them or the thief who's never been in your house (or Senate) before?

There are, of course, no easy reforms in a long-established political system—except this one. The principles of jury selection are simple to apply to representational democracy, at least in respect to our elected officials. We don't have to change the Constitution, we just have to change the Democratic and Republican nomination process, which is such a mess that any change would be uncontroversial.

There's a jury pool in every political district. Call up members of the pool for jury—that is to say, nominee—duty. Let voters in primaries act like prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges, excusing some and dismissing others. When the pool has been culled to a reasonable size, the general election voters can pick whom they like. Nothing would prevent common politicians from running on third party or write-in tickets. But they'd be easily identifiable as what they are—politicians.

Then we'll know when we've won an election: We'll know we've won when every candidate who is voted in begins his or her acceptance speech by saying, "Oh, #@*!" ♦

I've been happy lately, thinking about the good things to come . . . like the execution of Rushdie.

NEWSCOM

Anti-Anti-Islamism

A political tendency is born.

BY LEE SMITH

When Cat Stevens was introduced at Jon Stewart's recent "Rally to Restore Sanity," the musician also known by his Muslim name Yusuf Islam was greeted with warm applause and howls of approval. It was a strange reception coming from a culturally savvy, mostly twentysomething audience, for while Stevens's songs are a staple in the 1970s schlock-folk canon, he is best known these days for having supported Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's 1989 *fatwa* demanding the execution of novelist Salman Rushdie.

Stevens has tried to whitewash his record over the years, without ever acknowledging or apologizing for his comments, including his response to a British interviewer's question as to whether he would attend a demonstration to burn an effigy of the writer; Stevens answered glibly that he "hoped that it'd be the real thing."

"I don't know why no one in that crowd booed Stevens, or heckled him when he was introduced," says the British author Nick Cohen, who was in contact with Rushdie after the rally. "Rushdie phoned Stewart, who said he was sorry if it upset him, but it was clear Stewart didn't really care."

Presumably what mattered to Stewart and the rally's cosponsor Stephen Colbert was less Stevens's willingness to join in the bloodlust of the Islamic Republic of Iran (the *fatwa* has been reaffirmed by Iran's current supreme leader, Ali Khamenei) than the fact that Stevens/Islam had been put on a no-fly list by the Bush administration. Never mind that the folk singer had been identified as having donated to a Muslim charity with ties to Hamas; anyone considered unfriendly by Bush is an ally.

Stewart may be just a comedian, as he himself habitually justifies his excesses, but that gives even more rea-

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son for concern. It means the rehabilitation of a terrorist sympathizer has now hit the mainstream. What we're seeing is something akin to the Cold War-era phenomenon of anti-anti-Communism. The anti-anti-Communist left, comprising large sections of the press, academy, and even federal bureaucracies, was simply incapable of understanding that the defense of American civil liberties did not depend on the uncritical defense of the rights of Communists. Call this latest manifestation of liberal illogic anti-anti-Islamism.

While there are a few on the American left, especially in the academy, who maintain that Islamism delivers a valuable critique of Western imperialism, or is a social movement defending the oppressed, this is a minority position. Anti-anti-Islamism is something else: a belief that American opponents of Islamism have cooked up a Muslim scare for their own political benefit, just as anti-Communists once concocted a Red scare.

"The most obvious similarity is that both originate in a denial of the threat," says Norman Podhoretz, a veteran of both ideological conflicts. "The anti-anti-Communists consistently accused the anti-Communists of exaggerating the Soviet threat from outside and the threat of subversion from within. Anti-anti-Islamists make the same accusations against those who take the Islamist threat seriously. Either we are part of an assault on civil liberties, which we are indifferent to, or we are eager to go to war."

"The anti-anti-Islamists are extremely parochial," says Paul Berman, one of liberalism's few outspoken opponents of Islamism. "These are people who can't get beyond Republicans and Democrats. It's about the enemy of my enemy, and 'my enemy' for them is the GOP."

Anti-anti-Islamism is an instrument used to attack Republicans and conservatives, and while no one yet has been tapped to play the role of Joe McCarthy, former speaker of the House Newt Gingrich's obsession with keeping *sharia*, or Islamic law, out of the United States may well do more harm than good. The pressing issue in America's wars is not that American Muslims might want to get married or buried or pass on their estate according to Muslim traditions, but that we have real Islamist enemies like Iran trying to kill our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, and supporters of terrorism who live inside our borders and want to shoot us or blow things up.

These are not paranoid fantasies, even as anti-anti-Islamists, like their anti-anti-Communist forebears, pretend otherwise. "The idea is that we have nothing to fear from them except our own overreaction," says Joshua Muravchik, onetime national chairman of the Young People's Socialist League and now a fellow at Johns Hopkins's School of Advanced International Studies. What is true of Iran and terrorism today was true a quarter-century ago. Back then, says Muravchik, "they thought, 'if only we wouldn't scare Russians, they wouldn't behave so badly.' The anti-anti-Communists believed that the Cold War was as much our fault as theirs."

It must seem paradoxical to some that it was during this nearly 50-year reign of presumed paranoia, repression, and violations of civil liberties that the left most vocally articulated its reservations about, or outright hostility to, the American order, both at home and abroad. Under the umbrella of the Cold War, the left enjoyed its greatest triumph with the anti-Vietnam war movement, a glory reflected, albeit dimly, in its support of the Latin American guerrillas who stood against Reagan and the ravages of American empire. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the consequent discrediting of Communism, the American left was without a cause and so it looked to Europe.

The continent's post-World War II concerns were of a different provenance: More than Vietnam, it was Algeria that rallied the left. In its efforts to exorcise all of the ghosts from its colonial history, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, Europe identified the country still ostensibly oppressing its Muslim subjects—Israel. To be sure, the continent had a debt to pay to European Jews, but since they now had their own state and were essentially part of the West, Israel had to be made to understand its crime against the Islamic world. The European idea was, is, confused—is it anti-Israel or pro-Muslim or simply a narcissistic projection of fear and resentment masked as solidarity with the Global South's tragic other? At any rate, the American left grafted Europe's cause onto its own experience of anti-anti-Communism. In the two decades that have passed since the Rushdie *fatwa* and the fall of the Soviet Union, this is the ideological mash-up that has turned the American left anti-anti-Islamist.

"I very much doubt that there would be an international mobilization of writers and activists if something similar to the Rusdhie *fatwa* happened today," says Podhoretz. "Would PEN America"—the organization dedicated to protecting freedom of speech and in particular the rights of writers—"mobilize to defend Rushdie?"

In short, no. PEN has chosen instead to defend the rights of Islamists, like the Swiss-born ideologue Tariq Ramadan. Denied a visa by the Bush administration because of his support for a Hamas-affiliated charity, the grandson of the Muslim Brotherhood's founder became a cause célèbre for the American left. Following the Cold War template, the defense of Ramadan was couched in terms of civil liberties: His defenders claimed that Ramadan had been stripped of his right to freedom of speech. Of course, nothing of the sort had happened—no one had thought to censor Ramadan's widely available books and articles. The U.S. government had withheld a visa from Ramadan that kept him from taking a well-paying teaching position at Notre Dame. When the Obama State Department lifted Ramadan's visa ban last spring, PEN convened a panel to welcome the writer and "engage" with what are typically described as his valuable contributions to interfaith and inter-civilizational dialogue.

PEN showed just how ambivalent the left is about the free exchange of

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ideas by declining to invite Paul Berman, who has written extensively, and critically, on Ramadan, most recently in his book *The Flight of the Intellectuals*. "The defense of Ramadan here in intellectual circles reflects a series of unexamined and in some cases very unattractive assumptions," says Berman. "Not too many people believe that Islamism represents a progressive force—though some people do believe this, in roundabout ways—but they believe that multiculturalism is to be admired for expressions of authenticity of the self and of culture."

Indeed, one of the PEN panelists refused to take issue with Ramadan's squirrelly position that there should be a "moratorium" on Islamic laws that call for the stoning of women. It's up to Muslims to decide for themselves, Princeton University feminist Joan Wallach Scott told the audience. "What we are seeing is political correctness and multiculturalism turned rancid," says Berman.

"She'd yell bloody murder if an American equivocated about stoning women," says Ron Radosh, the prolific historian of American Communism. Scott, as Radosh explains, is a Red-diaper baby who was also head of the academic defense committee for Sami al-Arian, the former University of South Florida professor found guilty of supporting a designated terrorism organization, Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The Cold War lasted longer perhaps than it should have, thanks in part to those anti-anti-Communists—some out of malevolence and others out of intellectual confusion—whose language and ideas corrupted our political landscape. It is perhaps no coincidence that anti-anti-Islamism should appear during a presidential administration that has disdained to designate Islamism as an adversarial ideology. Many on the right, however, are still following the lead of the previous White House in referring to our conflicts as the "long war," destined to last a generation or more. Perhaps one way to bring our wars to a speedier end is to be clear not only about our enemy but also the efforts of its sometimes unwitting apologists here at home. ♦

The Other 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

Why won't the Pentagon stand up for ROTC?

BY CHERYL MILLER

Is the Solomon Amendment a dead letter? The statute, enacted in 1996, forbids federal funding to universities that prohibit military recruiters or Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) units from their campuses. Yet today, nearly 15 years since the amendment's passage—and despite President Barack Obama's campaign pledge to "vigorously enforce" the law—ROTC is still absent from some of the nation's most selective schools.

That absence is due to the well-known opposition of several prominent universities—among them, Harvard, Columbia, Yale, Stanford, and the University of Chicago—to the congressionally mandated "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy (DADT) for gays or bisexuals serving in the military. In a much-discussed speech at Duke University this September, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates professed encouragement that these universities were "at least reconsidering their position on military recruiting and officer training—a situation that has been neither good for the academy nor the country."

Certainly, the recent debate over modifying or eliminating DADT has raised hopes among some that ROTC will return to those colleges from which it has been barred since the Vietnam era. But with the election of many new conservatives to Congress this past week, it appears unlikely that such changes will be coming soon. And, indeed, other than a few perfunctory words in praise of Duke students who serve in the armed forces, Gates was largely silent as to what the department might do to address the current situation—other than to hope universities might one day welcome ROTC back.

That is not by accident. For decades, the Pentagon has taken the path of least resistance when it comes to recruiting at colleges—doubling down at "friendly" schools in the South and Midwest while largely writing off not only top colleges, but also entire regions where many of them are located. And it has been remarkably reluctant about pressing its right to recruit on college campuses, despite a unanimous Supreme Court decision affirming the Solomon Amendment, *Rumsfeld* v. *FAIR* (2006). Enforcement has been so lax as to lead some observers, such as University of Florida law professor Diane Mazur, to conclude that no university today maintains an "anti-ROTC" ban.

The history of the Solomon Amendment suggests another conclusion. Many are unaware that a law barring federal funds to schools with anti-recruitment policies has been on the books since the late 1960s. That law, however, was rarely invoked—the Defense Department made free use of a provision allowing the secretary to exempt noncompliant schools. Concerned by the Pentagon's unwillingness to enforce the law (and by grow-

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ing university opposition to DADT), Congress, led by New York Republican representative Gerald B. Solomon, eliminated the department's waiver power from the law and required the secretary to report noncompliant schools every six months.

For its part, the Pentagon strongly opposed the Solomon Amendment. But, as it turned out, the department didn't need express waiver power if it wanted to avoid enforcing the law. By a quirk in the law's language, it could simply choose not to ask universities if they were compliant with the law in the first place.

And aside from a brief spate of enforcement activity following the 9/11 attacks and culminating in *Rumsfeld* v. *FAIR*, that is just what the Defense Department has done. Indeed, the Pentagon's current policy toward noncompliant schools resembles nothing so much as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Defense officials have quietly advised student advocates for ROTC that the department cannot so much as indicate to a possibly noncompliant university its interest in establishing an on-campus ROTC program for fear of triggering the Solomon Amendment.

Not all students have taken the hint. The very year that the Defense Department won its five-year battle to enforce the Solomon Amendment, students and faculty at the University of California, Santa Cruz, repeatedly blocked or ousted military recruiters from on-campus job fairs. In response, a group of students associated with the conservative Young America's Foundation wrote Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, alerting him to possible violation of the Solomon Amendment. Receiving no answer, they sued the Defense Department for its failure to enforce the law.

The students ultimately lost their suit, with the Court of Appeals holding that they lacked standing to sue. Since then, the Defense Department has not taken action against a single university, aside from two holdouts from the *FAIR* case (two small law schools in Vermont and Minnesota).

Of course, the Defense Department has its reasons for not wanting to strong-arm ROTC's presence on university campuses via Solomon. Given the level of cooperation between a university and the military needed to make an ROTC program work, it's understandable that the Pentagon does not want to be in the position of pushing to have a program where faculty and administrative support is lacking.

Nevertheless, it should not be left to the Pentagon to decide whether a law of the land will be enforced or not. By adopting its own version of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," the Pentagon is only encouraging the growing gap between American elites and those who put their lives at risk for our freedoms. As Gates warned, America can no longer afford its best and brightest thinking of military service as "something for other people to do." ♦

Vote for America

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Nearly 50 years ago, President John F. Kennedy encouraged his fellow Americans to "… ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." Let me suggest one thing that you can do to help your country today: vote. For more than 234 years, the United States has stood as a beacon of hope and freedom in an oftentimes dark world. But our strength as a nation has never come from a dictator or a king. Instead, it comes from the common citizen.

When an American steps into the ballot box, that citizen is the equal of any other—education, race, religion, and social class are all meaningless. It's one person, one vote. As a result of this system, America is one of the freest, most prosperous, and most stable countries in history. In other corners of the world, disagreement over the outcome of an election could lead to riots, tanks in the streets, and worse. But not here. The peaceful transfer of power has been our hallmark. We accept the results of elections and move on.

Voting is more than a right; it's a responsibility. Americans should educate themselves about the important issues that are at stake in each election. It's not enough to just show up on Election Day and pull the lever for the most familiar name. Instead, you should know where the candidates stand on the issues, and then support the ones who you believe will do the most to move this country forward. This civic engagement is what keeps our democracy vibrant.

The U.S. Chamber is doing its part to remind the American people of the importance of voting. We believe that free enterprise—along with our democratic values—is the foundation upon which this nation is built. That's why we have been conducting a nationwide voter education program to remind our fellow citizens of what's at stake in this election.

If we fail to live up to our civic obligations, we would be dishonoring those Americans who have fought—and died—to preserve our freedoms. From Washington's men encamped at Valley Forge, to Lincoln's army of emancipators, to the Greatest Generation preserving a free Europe, to today's American servicemen and servicewomen keeping us safe from terrorism, much has been risked—and lost—to make sure that we can enjoy the privileges of life as Americans.

So do something good for your country today, and go vote. You can find your local polling location and learn more about the candidates for federal office at www.voteforbusiness.com.

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Lend Me Your Earmarks

It's now or never for Republicans.

BY KENNETH Y. TOMLINSON

Every time I hear Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell dismiss concerns over earmarking, I think of his fellow Kentucky Republican Hal Rogers, the senior House appropriator who has loaded pork into the federal budget.

Rogers, who hails from the mountains of eastern Kentucky, is the ranking member on the appropriations subcommittee that funds homeland security. After 9/11, Rogers used tens of millions in earmarks (some $10 million last year alone) to fund a National Institute for Hometown Security in his isolated hometown of Somerset, Kentucky. His political pals are on the payroll at salaries far exceeding the local norm.

Or go out to pristine Washington state, the domain of liberal Democrat Patty Murray, who has used her clout to earmark millions for firms that employ a host of her former Senate committee aides. The classic case of Murray earmark abuse is the $4.5 million she (and a pair of House colleagues) forced the Navy to give a Washington ship-building company to construct an 85-foot speedboat for which the Navy had no use. Once the boat was paid for, the Navy handed it over to the University of Washington. But the university could find no use for the $4.5 million boat—and years later, when a newspaper exposé was published, it still lay idle.

Indeed, a *Seattle Times* series on earmarking found that the most important employees for many defense contractors aren't engineers to build the weapons of the future but Washington lobbyists to get earmarks.

Examples of earmark abuse are so plentiful—Alaska's Bridge to Nowhere became a symbol of pork barrel spending gone mad—that it is difficult to conceive how Washington insiders can dismiss their corrupting influence.

Some apologists insist earmarks are a manifestation of the Constitution's grant to Congress of the government's spending power. Nevada's Harry Reid insists earmarking has been going on "since we were a country." But earmarking did not become a widespread political tool in Congress until late in the 20th century.

According to a study of earmarks and pork for Citizens Against Government Waste, congressional pork in 1992 came to less than 900 projects for $2.6 billion. By 2005 congressional pork had mushroomed to nearly 14,000 projects gouging taxpayers better than $27 billion. The dollar figure may not sound large these days, but the corrosive effect on legislators' principles of tens of thousands of favors delivered and owed is huge.

Newt Gingrich may have played a leading role in the growth of earmarking when as speaker he maneuvered then-representative Bob Livingston of Louisiana to the appropriations chairmanship. Together they helped establish the earmark as the modern congressman's favorite tool of seduction. Livingston also froze into place the longtime (mostly Democratic) staff of the Appropriations Committee, further entrenching the sense of entitlement that has long separated the spenders from their congressional colleagues.

Arguably the first fruit of the Tea Party movement has been the stunning turn of voters against earmarking. It once was a given in modern American politics that powerful appropriators would plant benefits for the folks back home in the tradition of the rich aunt who always remembered your birthday.

Like the radical shift in public tolerance of drinking and driving in the 1980s, earmarks this year have come to be viewed by many as symptomatic of a deep-seated corruption in American government.

In coming days, in both the Senate and the House, Republicans will have the opportunity to stop earmarks and pork. On November 16, South Carolina senator Jim DeMint, who along with his Republican colleagues Tom Coburn and John McCain, has long battled for earmark reform, will be forcing a vote in the GOP conference on a moratorium on earmarks.

Ultimately, DeMint sees term limits for appropriators as the only real path to reform, but Old Dogs like Minority Leader McConnell are having a hard time accepting even the moratorium.

In the House, the situation is more complex. In the wake of the GOP House victory, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page gave John Boehner a huge spread to explain "What the Next Speaker Must Do." Prominent in the article was a pledge: "No earmarks."

But the ink was not dry before Boehner was giving former appropriations chairman Jerry Lewis—one of Congress's most notorious earmarkers—reason to believe that Speaker Boehner might grant a waiver to the House Republican term limit rule that would block Lewis from resuming the chairmanship.

Keeping Boehner true to his word is especially important since insiders believe that without Lewis in the race, House Republicans would select Representative Jack Kingston of Georgia, a respected conservative and reformer who was largely responsible for the House GOP earmark moratorium last year. These decisions will be finalized in the House GOP conference

Kenneth Y. Tomlinson is a former editor in chief of Reader's Digest.

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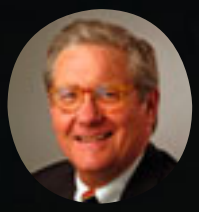

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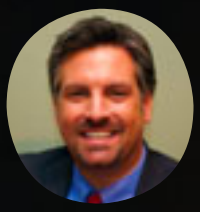

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and caucus on November 17 and 18.

Some in Washington find it hard to believe that the first act of House and Senate Republicans would be to back off on earmark reform. To do so would prompt Tea Party disenchantment with congressional Republicans. That is why the next few days could be a defining moment for the new House majority.

Meanwhile, one guesses that Hal Rogers's payrollers at the National Institute for Hometown Security in Somerset are feeling a little less secure this week. ♦

No Camelot 2.0

The decline of liberal idealism.

BY JAMES PIERESON

For the now aging partisans of Camelot, November is a month of anniversaries. It was 50 years ago last week when John F. Kennedy was elected to the presidency as the sophisticated champion of the new liberalism. And it was 47 years ago next week that the dreams of Camelot were cruelly snuffed out on the streets of Dallas.

The dual anniversaries signify the extreme emotions of hope and despair that recollections of the Kennedy years still provoke among those whose political outlooks were shaped during that era. They are one reason why we have yet to find closure as to the meaning of the Kennedy presidency. Still viewed from extreme and shifting perspectives, JFK's administration has yet to come into clear focus. Nor, according to some, is Camelot yet a thing of the past. For nearly 50 years it has inspired hopes in many that Kennedy's spirit eventually will be renewed in the person of some new champion.

Thus it was that Barack Obama came to the presidency two years ago amid breathless expectations that he would restore the spirit of Camelot and revive the fortunes of liberalism. Much as happened with JFK, Obama's admirers showered him with superlatives out of proportion to his actual accomplishments. The Camelot legend, if it had been studied and its lessons taken to heart, might have proved a cautionary tale about the consequences of excessive ambition and of successes gained too early and without effort. The Arthurian tale, after all, does not have a "lived happily ever after" ending.

Nor, as things are beginning to look, will the Obama presidency. The "shellacking" his party took in the midterm elections has killed off all hopes that he will preside over a renewal of any kind, unless it is a renewal of conservatism in response to his missteps and miscalculations. Rarely in the past has a president been so sharply rebuked by the voters in a midterm election. Nor has a president ever squandered so quickly the kinds of political advantages that Obama carried with him into office. Understandably, then, the references to Camelot and to JFK are not much heard these days.

Obama might have learned a thing or two from the real JFK as opposed to the idealized image of the man that took shape after his death. The posthumous references to Kennedy's idealism have obscured the fact that he was a politician of exceptional skill for whom persuasion and compromise were keys to success. He never wanted to get too far ahead of public opinion, nor did he try to ram through controversial legislation on partisan votes. Though elected by a razor-thin margin in 1960, Kennedy managed to gain a stalemate for his party in the 1962 midterm elections. He was still widely popular in late 1963 when he embarked on that visit to Texas. Had he lived, he undoubtedly would have won reelection by a comfortable margin.

In truth, the Camelot ideal never fit Obama, who brought to the presidency a sense of ambivalence about the American future and America's role in the world. It is hard to play the role of inspiring leader while counseling one's citizens to scale back their expectations. While President Obama is capable of eloquence, his attempts often fall short because they are accompanied by an undertow of caution and pessimism. It is hard to imagine Obama saying, as Kennedy did, that "we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty." Such bold calls to arms were perfectly consistent with the liberalism of Kennedy's time, but for many reasons are at odds with the liberalism of today. For better or worse, Obama's ambitions do not approach the high ideals of Camelot—and he and his admirers might be better off if they acknowledged that.

A defeat can be a terrible thing to waste, especially if it provides one with an incentive to reassess what it is possible to achieve. President Obama is not going to bring about a revolution in the consciousness of our time. Nor will he permanently change the terms of our politics. It was this kind of thinking, based upon arrogant presumptions of greatness, that led to his defeat. By abandoning greatness, however, Obama may yet find a way to survive—and find a role for himself through which he might make a lasting, positive contribution. In doing so he might permit the rest of us to put to rest at last the shattered dreams of Camelot. ♦

James Piereson is president of the William E. Simon Foundation, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, and the author of Camelot and the Cultural Revolution: How the Assassination of John F. Kennedy Shattered American Liberalism.

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American Narcissus

The vanity of Barack Obama

By Jonathan V. Last

Why has Barack Obama failed so spectacularly? Is he too dogmatically liberal or too pragmatic? Is he a socialist, or an anticolonialist, or a philosopher-president? Or is it possible that Obama's failures stem from something simpler: vanity. Politicians as a class are particularly susceptible to mirror-gazing. But Obama's vanity is overwhelming. It defines him, his politics, and his presidency.

It's revealed in lots of little stories. There was the time he bragged about how one of his campaign volunteers, who had tragically died of breast cancer, "insisted she's going to be buried in an Obama T-shirt." There was the Nobel acceptance speech where he conceded, "I do not bring with me today a *definitive* solution to the problems of war" (the emphasis is mine). There was the moment during the 2008 campaign when Obama appeared with a seal that was a mash-up of the Great Seal of the United States and his own campaign logo (with its motto *Vero Possumus*, "Yes we Can" in Latin). Just a few weeks ago, Obama was giving a speech when the actual presidential seal fell from the rostrum. "That's all right," he quipped. "All of you know who I am." *Oh yes, Mr. President, we certainly do*.

GARY LOCKE

My favorite is this line from page 160 of *The Audacity of Hope*:

> I find comfort in the fact that the longer I'm in politics the less nourishing popularity becomes, that a striving for power and rank and fame seems to betray a poverty of ambition, and that I am answerable mainly to the steady gaze of my own conscience.

So popularity and fame once nourished him, but now his ambition is richer and he's answerable not, like some presidents, to the Almighty, but to the gaze of his personal conscience. Which is steady. The fact that this sentence appears in the second memoir of a man not yet 50 years old—and who had been in national politics for all of two years—is merely icing.

People have been noticing Obama's vanity for a long time. In 2008, one of his Harvard Law classmates, the entertainment lawyer Jackie Fuchs, explained what Obama was like during his school days: "One of our classmates once famously noted that you could judge just how pretentious someone's remarks in class were by how high they ranked on the 'Obamanometer,' a term that lasted far longer than our time at law school. Obama didn't just share in class—he pontificated. He knew better than everyone else in the room, including the teachers. "

The story of Obama's writing career is an object lesson in how our president's view of himself shapes his interactions with the world around him. In 1990, Obama was wrapping up his second year at Harvard Law when the *New York Times* ran a profile of him on the occasion of his becoming the first black editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. A book agent in New York named Jane Dystel read the story and called up the young man, asking if he'd be interested in writing a book. Like any 29-year-old, he wasn't about to turn down money. He promptly accepted a deal with Simon & Schuster's Poseidon imprint—reportedly in the low six-figures—to write a book about race relations.

Obama missed his deadline. No matter. His agent quickly secured him another contract, this time with Times Books. And a $40,000 advance. Not bad for an unknown author who had already blown one deal, writing about a noncommercial subject.

By this point Obama had left law school, and academia was courting him. The University of Chicago Law School approached him; although they didn't have

A senior writer at The Weekly Standard, *Jonathan V. Last covered the Obama campaign in 2008.*

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any specific needs, they wanted to be in the Barack Obama business. As Douglas Baird, the head of Chicago's appointments committee, would later explain, "You look at his background—*Harvard Law Review* president, magna cum laude, and he's African American. This is a no-brainer hiring decision at the entry level of any law school in the country." Chicago invited Obama to come in and teach just about anything he wanted. But Obama wasn't interested in a professor's life. Instead, he told them that he was writing a book—about voting rights. The university made him a fellow, giving him an office and a paycheck to keep him going while he worked on this important project.

In case you're keeping score at home, there was some confusion as to what book young Obama was writing. His publisher thought he was writing about race relations. His employer thought he was writing about voting rights law. But Obama seems to have never seriously considered either subject. Instead, he decided that his subject would be himself. The 32-year-old was writing a memoir.

Obama came clean to the university first. He waited until his fellowship was halfway over—perhaps he was concerned that his employers might not like the bait-and-switch. He needn't have worried. Baird still hoped that Obama would eventually join the university's faculty (he had already begun teaching a small classload as a "senior lecturer"). "It was a good deal for us," Baird explained, "because he was a good teaching prospect and we wanted him around."

The Great Seal of the Obama Campaign

And it all worked out in the end. The book Obama eventually finished was *Dreams from My Father*. It didn't do well initially, but nine years later, after his speech at the 2004 Democratic convention made him a star, it sold like gangbusters. Obama got rich. And famous. The book became the springboard for his career in national politics.

Only it didn't quite work out for everybody. Obama left the University of Chicago, never succumbing to their offers of a permanent position in their hallowed halls. Simon & Schuster, which had taken a chance on an unproven young writer, got burned for a few thousand bucks. And Jane Dystel, who'd plucked him out of the pages of the *New York Times* and got him the deal to write the book that sped his political rise? As soon as Obama was ready to negotiate the contract for his second book—the big-money payday—he dumped her and replaced her with super-agent Robert Barnett.

We risk reading too much into these vignettes—after all, our president is a mansion with many rooms and it would be foolish to reduce him to pure ego. Yet the vignettes are so numerous. For instance, a few years ago Obama's high school basketball coach told ABC News how, as a teenager, Obama always badgered him for more playing time, even though he wasn't the best player on the team—or even as good as he thought he was. Everyone who has ever played team sports has encountered the kid with an inflated sense of self. That's common. What's rare is the kid who feels entitled enough to nag the coach about his minutes. Obama was that kid. His enthusiasm about his abilities and his playing time extended into his political life. In 2004, Obama explained to author David Mendell how he saw his future as a national political figure: "I'm LeBron, baby. I can play on this level. I got some game." After just a couple of months in the Senate, Obama jumped the Democratic line and started asking voters to make him president.

Yet you don't have to delve deep into armchair psychology to see how Obama's vanity has shaped his presidency. In January 2009 he met with congressional leaders to discuss the stimulus package. The meeting was supposed to foster bipartisanship. Senator Jon Kyl questioned the plan's mixture of spending and tax cuts. Obama's response to him was, "I won." A year later Obama held another meeting to foster bipartisanship for his health care reform plan. There was some technical back-and-forth about Republicans not having the chance to properly respond within the constraints of the format because President Obama had done some pontificating, as is his wont. Obama explained, "There was an imbalance on the opening statements because"—here he paused, self-satisfiedly—"I'm the president. And so I made, uh, I don't count my time in terms of dividing it evenly."

There are lots of times when you get the sense that Obama views the powers of the presidency as little more than a shadow of his own person. When he journeyed to Copenhagen in October 2009 to pitch Chicago's bid for the Olympics, his speech to the IOC was about—you guessed it: "Nearly one year ago, on a clear November night," he told the committee, "people from every corner of the world gathered in the city of Chicago or in front of their televisions to watch the results of . . . " and away he went. A short while later he was back in Copenhagen for

AP / ALEX BRANDON

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the climate change summit. When things looked darkest, he personally commandeered the meeting to broker a "deal." Which turned out to be worthless. In January 2010, Obama met with nervous Democratic congressmen to assure them that he wasn't driving the party off a cliff. Confronted with worries that 2010 could be a worse off-year election than 1994, Obama explained to the professional politicians, "Well, the big difference here and in '94 was you've got me."

In the midst of the BP oil spill last summer, Obama explained, "My job right now is just to make sure that everybody in the Gulf understands this is what I wake up to in the morning and this is what I go to bed at night thinking about: the spill." Read that again: The president thinks that the job of the president is to make certain the citizens correctly understand what's on the president's mind.

Obama's vanity is even more jarring when paraded in the foreign arena. In April, Poland suffered a national tragedy when its president, first lady, and a good portion of the government were killed in a plane crash. Obama decided not to go to the funeral. He played golf instead. Though maybe it's best that he didn't make the trip. When he journeyed to Great Britain to meet with the queen he gave her an amazing gift: an iPod loaded with recordings of his speeches and pictures from his inauguration.

On November 9, 2009, Europe celebrated the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was kind of a big deal. They may not mention the Cold War in schools much these days, but it pitted the Western liberal order against a totalitarian ideology in a global struggle. In this the United States was the guarantor of liberty and peace for the West; had we faltered, no corner of the world would have been safe from Soviet domination.

President Obama has a somewhat different reading. He explains: "The Cold War reached a conclusion because of the actions of many nations over many years, and because the people of Russia and Eastern Europe stood up and decided that its end would be peaceful." Pretty magnanimous of the Soviets to let the long twilight struggle end peacefully like that, especially after all we did to provoke them.

So Obama doesn't know much about the Cold War. Which is probably why he didn't think the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall was all that important. When the leaders of Europe got together to commemorate it, he decided not to go to that, either. But he did find time to record a video message, which he graciously allowed the Europeans to air during the ceremony.

In his video, Obama ruminated for a few minutes on the grand events of the 20th century, the Cold War itself, and the great lesson we all should take from this historic passing: "Few would have foreseen . . . that a united Germany would be led by a woman from Brandenburg or that their American ally would be led by a man of African descent. But human destiny is what human beings make of it." The fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, and the freedom of all humanity—it's great stuff. Right up there with the election of Barack Obama.

All presidents are hostage to self-confidence. But not since Babe Ruth grabbed a bat and wagged his fat finger at Wrigley's center-field wall has an American politician called his shot like Barack Obama. He announced his candidacy in Springfield, Illinois, on the steps where Abraham Lincoln gave his "house divided" speech. He mentioned Lincoln continually during the 2008 campaign. After he vanquished John McCain he passed out copies of *Team of Rivals*, a book about Lincoln's cabinet, to his senior staff. At his inauguration, he chose to be sworn into office using Lincoln's Bible. At the inaugural luncheon following the ceremony, he requested that the food—each dish of which was selected as a "tribute" to Lincoln—be served on replicas of Lincoln's china. At some point in January 2009 you wanted to grab Obama by the lapels and tell him—*We get it! You're the Rail Splitter! If we promise to play along, will you keep the log cabin out of the Rose Garden?*

It's troubling that a fellow whose electoral rationale was that he edited the *Harvard Law Review* and wrote a couple of memoirs was comparing himself to the man who saved the Union. But it tells you all you need to know about what Obama thinks of his political gifts and why he's unperturbed about having led his party into political disaster in the midterms. He assumes that he'll be able to reverse the political tide once he becomes the issue, in the presidential race in 2012. As he said to Harry Reid after the majority leader congratulated him on one particularly fine oration, "I have a gift, Harry."

But Obama's faith in his abilities extends beyond mere vote-getting. Buried in a 2008 *New Yorker* piece by Ryan Lizza about the Obama campaign was this gob-smacking passage:

> Obama said that he liked being surrounded by people who expressed strong opinions, but he also said, "I think that I'm a better speechwriter than my speechwriters. I know more about policies on any particular issue than my policy directors. And I'll tell you right now that I'm gonna think I'm a better political director than my political director." After Obama's first debate with McCain, on September 26th, [campaign political director Patrick] Gaspard sent him an e-mail. "You are more clutch than Michael Jordan," he wrote. Obama replied, "Just give me the ball."

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In fairness to Obama, maybe he is a better speechwriter than his speechwriters. After all, his speechwriter was a 27-year-old, and the most affecting part of Obama's big 2008 stump speech was recycled from Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick, with whom he shared a campaign strategist. But it's instructive that Obama thinks he knows "more about policies on any particular issue" than his policy directors. The rate of growth of the mohair subsidy? The replacement schedule for servers at the NORAD command center? The relationship between annual rainfall in northeast Nevada and water prices in Las Vegas?

What Scott Fitzgerald once said about Hollywood is true of the American government: It can be understood only dimly and in flashes; there are no more than a handful of men who have ever been able to keep the entire equation in their heads. Barack Obama had worked in the federal government for all of four years. He was not one of those men. More important, however, is that as president *he shouldn't be* the chief wonk, speechwriter, and political director.

David Remnick delivers a number of insights about Obama in his book *The Bridge*. For instance, Valerie Jarrett—think of her as the president's Karen Hughes—tells Remnick that Obama is often bored with the world around him. "I think that he has never really been challenged intellectually," Jarrett says. "So what I sensed in him was not just a restless spirit but somebody with such extraordinary talents that they had to be really taxed in order for him to be happy." Jarrett concludes, "He's been bored to death his whole life."

With one or two possible exceptions, that is. Remnick reports that "Jarrett was quite sure that one of the few things that truly engaged him fully before going to the White House was writing *Dreams from My Father*." So the only job Barack Obama ever had that didn't bore him was writing about Barack Obama. But wait, there's more.

David Axelrod—he's Obama's Karl Rove—told Remnick that "Barack hated being a senator." Remnick went on:

> Washington was a grander stage than Springfield, but the frustrations of being a rookie in a minority party were familiar. Obama could barely conceal his frustration with the torpid pace of the Senate. His aides could sense his frustration and so could his colleagues. "He was so bored being a senator," one Senate aide said.

Obama's friend and law firm colleague Judd Miner agreed. "The reality," Miner told Remnick, "was that during his first two years in the U.S. Senate, I think, he was struggling; it wasn't nearly as stimulating as he expected." But even during his long, desolate exile as a senator, Obama was able to find a task that satisfied him. Here's Remnick again: "The one project that did engage Obama fully was work on *The Audacity of Hope*. He procrastinated for a long time and then, facing his deadline, wrote nearly a chapter a week." Your tax dollars at work.

Looking at this American Narcissus, it's easy to be hammered into a stupor by the accumulated acts of vanity. *Oh look*, we think to ourselves, *there's our new president accepting his Nobel Peace Prize. There's the president likening his election to the West's victory in the Cold War. There's the commander in chief bragging about his March Madness picks.*

Yet it's important to remember that our presidents aren't always this way. When he accepted command of the Revolutionary forces, George Washington said,

> I feel great distress, from a consciousness that my abilities and military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important Trust. . . . I beg it may be remembered, by every Gentleman in the room, that I, this day, declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the Command I am honored with.

Accepting the presidency, Washington was even more reticent. Being chosen to be president, he said, "could not but overwhelm with despondence one who, inheriting inferior endowments from nature and unpracticed in the duties of civil administration, ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own deficiencies."

In his biography of John Quincy Adams, Robert Remini noted that Adams was not an especially popular fellow. Yet on one of the rare occasions when he was met with adoring fans, "he told crowds that gathered to see and hear him to go home and attend to their private duties."

And Obama? In light of the present state of his presidency, let's look back at his most famous oration:

> The journey will be difficult. The road will be long. I face this challenge with profound humility, and knowledge of my own limitations. But I also face it with limitless faith in the capacity of the American people. Because if we are willing to work for it, and fight for it, and believe in it, then I am absolutely certain that generations from now, we will be able to look back and tell our children that this was the moment when we began to provide care for the sick and good jobs to the jobless; this was the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal; this was the moment when we ended a war and secured our nation and restored our image as the last, best hope on earth. This was the moment—this was the time—when we came together to remake this great nation so that it may always reflect our very best selves and our highest ideals.

The speech was given on June 3, 2008, and the epoch-making historical event to which "this moment" refers throughout is Barack Obama's victory over Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primaries. ♦

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Pretentiousness Kills

Lessons from the corrupt prosecution of Geert Wilders

By Sam Schulman

Since January, the Dutch politician Geert Wilders, Beach Boy-haired founder and leader of the Freedom Party (PVV), has been on trial in Amsterdam for inciting hatred against Muslims and Holland's recent Moroccan immigrants, for inciting discrimination against Muslims, and for insulting Muslims. Wilders's alleged offenses include directing a short film, *Fitna*, that criticizes the Koran as an incitement to violence and writing a letter to the editor that called for the banning of the Koran—a "fascist book," in Wilders's opinion.

The wording of the law is clear. It targets anyone who "publicly, verbally or in writing or image, deliberately expresses himself in any way insulting of a group of people because of their race, their religion, or belief." Before Wilders's indictment almost a year ago, Dutch politicians and lawyers, liberals and conservatives alike, assured the public that the law could only be used against those who were haranguing mobs bent on riot, and against publishers of *Mein Kampf* (banned in Holland) and other hate speech. But an Amsterdam judge named Tom Schalken overruled the public prosecutors in his district who recommended that the case against Wilders (urged on by extreme-left politicians) be dropped.

For obvious reasons, Wilders's trial has attracted worldwide attention. It's not just that, since the indictment, the PVV's stunning success in the June general election made it the third largest party in Holland. The charges against Wilders raise grave human rights, legal, political, and moral issues. Have Holland's laws and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights put fears of blasphemy ahead of any concern with the right of free speech? And have the Dutch allowed the definition of blasphemy and insult to be controlled by the feelings of a particular group of citizens—Muslims—because of favoritism or fear of violence? A Dutch professor of human rights created a furor when he suggested that Wilders is being persecuted just as dissidents are persecuted in China and Cuba.

The trial has been suspended since October 22, when an appellate court dismissed the panel of judges led by Judge Schalken and ordered a new trial, which may resume shortly, as three new judges were appointed November 11. What happened to the first panel of judges? Their dismissal had surprisingly little to do with the profound issues of human rights and political freedom I mention—and about which I have nothing new to say here. It happened because an expert witness, a retired professor of Arabic and Islamic thought named J.J.G. Jansen, was affronted by a load of post-structuralist cant.

But Professor Jansen's indignation may be just as important as the weighty issues touched on in the prosecution of Wilders. It raises the question of whether our best and brightest are still intellectually equipped even to think about, much less decide intelligently, the great questions of law, freedom, and human rights. What is really troubling, and fascinating, about the Wilders prosecution is how much it depends on the intellectual weapons of "postmodernism," deployed by a highly educated Dutch elite. In Amsterdam's battlefield of ideas, the guns of Adorno, Foucault, Kristeva, Derrida, Edward Said, and their countless academic popularizers have been turned against civil rights and human freedom. Learned pretentiousness has consequences.

J.J.G. Jansen, known as Hans Jansen in Holland, retired from the University of Utrecht after a distinguished and rather dashing academic career, including many years spent living and researching in Cairo. Jansen testified at the Wilders trial in May. He had been called as a recognized expert in Arabic and the modern interpretation of the Koran (about which he has published several books and numerous articles since 1972) to tell the court about what the Koran actually has to say on the subject of jihad and other disagreeable matters. Jansen believes that he was asked to testify because the court "could not imagine that the things Geert Wilders claimed were in the Koran were actually in the Koran."

On October 20, Jansen dropped the bomb that derailed the trial. In a post at the small but well-regarded blog HoeiBoei, he revealed that a few days before his May testimony, Judge Schalken had engineered a surprise meeting between them at a dinner party, where the judge tried blatantly to influence his testimony. Schalken's intentions seemed obvious, even clumsy. He kept turning the subject

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of conversation to the trial, tried to convince Jansen that the charges against Wilders were justified, and attempted to elicit Jansen's sympathy and even his cooperation with the prosecution (Dutch trials are always presided over by a panel of judges, but Schalken's role in forcing the case to trial was unusual).

Jansen's witty account of the dinner party produced chaos among the Dutch legal establishment. The Amsterdam appellate court to whom Wilders's lawyer appealed delayed for a few days, insisting that it was "implausible" that Schalken could have intended to influence the witness, but suddenly gave in. On October 22 they dismissed Schalken and his fellow judges from the trial for bias and ordered that the case be restarted. But behind the scenes there was even more uproar, very un-Dutch, in the world of judges, prosecutors, and law professors. Secret and very improper memos flew from officials of one court to judges of another. Judges met in secret like trade union bosses. The president of the Supreme Court sent rockets in all directions. What exactly did take place at the dinner party?

Geert Wilders in court

Let me caution the jury: You must guard yourself against bringing your own cultural preconceptions to the question. At a dinner party of pols in pre-Tea Party Illinois, you might imagine brown paper bags of cash circulating with the port and walnuts, the after-dinner conversation veering to whether it's better to serve on the Sanitary Commission, the Cook County Park District, or to aim for Carp Czardom. In London or Oxford, you might expect to overhear mumbling about a peerage, connected to a consulting gig or two.

They order things differently in the Netherlands, and Tom Schalken used different bait. After all, his host, the fellow guests, and perhaps Jansen himself had all been comrades on the university barricades in the '60s and now enjoy distinguished places in academia, the bar, and public broadcasting. Schalken seems to have calculated that Jansen would respond if the trial were "reframed": He should think of it not as the criminal trial of a notoriously populist politician, but as a high-level academic seminar. Geert Wilders was not a defendant but a text to be deconstructed.

Jansen's blog post tells the story well (I rely on the translation by the Dutch blogger "Klein Verzet," aided by my own bad Dutch). Jansen was not at all surprised to meet the usual run of left-wing highbrows at the party—they were the pals of his host, Bertus Hendriks. Hendriks is famous in the Netherlands for having been a leader of the 1968 student revolt at the University of Amsterdam, and then for many years a senior correspondent with the Netherlands Broadcasting Service. In his piece, Jansen teases Hendriks for being the heart and soul of the Palestina Komitee, the most prominent of many Dutch do-gooder organizations advocating the destruction of the state of Israel: "No one can talk as beautifully about the sufferings of the Palestinians as Bertus," Jansen wrote, but "after a couple of beers, Bertus once told me that he doesn't care that much about the Palestinian problem itself. What he's really interested in, he explained to me painstakingly (because I am a 'petty-bourgeois product of the older generation') is using the fate of the Palestinians as a way of unmasking the 'global structure of exploitation.'" Jansen did expect to be quizzed about Islam and the Wilders trial, but in private and among friends of Hendriks—even if those friends were officials of the biggest Dutch socialist and Green parties and other judges.

But the atmosphere of the party was not quite what he expected. He was astounded to meet Schalken, simply as a matter of legal propriety—he even feared that anything he said in response to Schalken's first questions about Islam might put him in legal jeopardy (much to Schalken's indignation!). But eventually he realized that something else was going on. The underlying message was not that he was regarded as an Islamophobe or reactionary—far from it. Jansen was meant to understand that he was at the party because he was one of the elect—professors, socialist politicians, and intellectuals, with degrees from Amsterdam and Leiden and CV-pagefuls of imposing books and articles. Such people of quality have to stick together, whatever their politics, against counter-jumpers like Wilders.

> Schalken, an Emeritus Professor at the University of Amsterdam, the very university with which Balkenende, Rouvoet and Bos were associated [the then-current Dutch prime minister and his coalition partners who were running against Wilders in the upcoming June elections], let me know that this trial was, purely in scholarly terms, an "imposingly interesting case," which needed tremendous study and would yield all kinds of perspective on vital current questions.
>
> Ah, now I understood.
>
> For Schalken, this trial was not so much a real trial, but rather a kind of academic seminar, or even a legal student's plea exercise—not a criminal trial with serious consequences for the adults involved in. This academic exercise would make use of a profoundly threatened and vulnerable politician. "Unmasking global structures"—what a nice hobby to have!

Wilders presents a serious problem for the *Handelsblad*-reading (i.e., *New York Times*-reading) classes. What scandalizes them about Wilders are not so much his commonsense views on immigration and doubts about political Islam, not even so much that he speaks, with-

REUTERS / ROBIN VAN LONKHUIJSEN

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out racism or neo-Nazism, for 1.4 million Dutch voters who had been persuaded to feel ashamed by a national consensus of politicians, professors, jurists, and journalists. It's his rhetorical skill that floors them. Wilders is a persuasive and concise speaker, writer, even filmmaker—yet he never attended a real university. He studied "insurance" at the equivalent of a community technical college and has law certificates—not full degrees—from a distance-learning college. And there's more. He is of partly Indonesian descent. He is from a Catholic family (though he is an atheist) from largely Catholic Limburg province, dangling off from the rest of the Netherlands at its far southeastern border. Limburg has its own style, its own dialect, and shares a much longer border with the Belgian province of Limburg than it does with what might be called the Netherlands' "lower 48." It's not just his flamboyant personality and hairstyle. Wilders himself can seem foreign in his affect (and perhaps his accent): One foreign correspondent wrote a long thumbsucker headlined "Listening to Wilders raises the question: am I still in Israel?" His propensity to speak bluntly and charm the masses is as embarrassing and horrifying to the educated classes as Sarah Palin is to everyone I know.

Wilders should simply be unable to compete on equal terms with highbrow judges, lawyers, professors, and journalists, all liberal arts graduates of the great Dutch universities. But he can, and as a result many nice Dutchmen feel that there's something uncanny about him. After all, as one *Handelsblad* reader exclaimed, "Highly educated PVVers scarcely exist. Whenever you read the response of a PVV member, there are almost always several grammatical errors." Wilders, for all his educational limitations, nonetheless speaks truth to those who believe in such things as "global structures of exploitation" and the fetishization of free speech.

But there's help for liberal Netherlanders. If you were in Rotterdam last month, you could have joined them at a public seminar, cosponsored by Rotterdam's Erasmus University, that taught the secret sources of Wilders's dazzling rhetorical technique. The seminar leader, Delft University professor Hans de Bruijn, has just published a new book on how Wilders's debating skills can fool you into thinking that his arguments are reasonable, even attractive. De Bruijn promised to teach the audience his own method of resisting Wilders. Then audience members were invited to test their newly learned skill against a professional actor playing the role of Geert Wilders!

What both empowers and disables the Dutch elite in the face of J.J.G. Jansen's learned honesty and Wilders's sheer talent is their long marinade in the discourse of postmodernism. The *Handelsblad*-reading classes actually believe what they have been taught in school: namely, that opposition to multiculturalism and unlimited immigration has no rational basis. Left in the state of nature, the Dutch masses would have followed elite guidance and never have had second thoughts about these matters. That it might be disagreeable, even dangerous, to have neighbors who do not respect the secular nature of government, sexual equality, freedom of speech, and toleration of homosexuality—these feelings, to the postmodern eye, are merely social constructions.

Properly deconstructed, these feelings can be seen for what they are: the product of malign, racist, and no doubt Zionist rabble-rousers and their politician toadies, who have created these feelings among the Dutch electorate to redirect anger that would otherwise be correctly aimed at capitalism. So Rudolph Peters, professor of Islamic law at Amsterdam University, instructs us in his paper "Dutch Public Intellectuals and the Koran." He believes that the Dutch masses have "feelings of fear" that stem from the "deep transformations" of Dutch society in recent decades that are really caused by left-wing bogeys such as "globalization" (from which the Netherlands has in fact profited immensely). A certain group of Islam-hating intellectuals and politicians then "projected" this anticapitalist resentment against radical Islam instead. Their voices entirely constructed reality.

You might then argue that Islam should be able to take its lumps just as Christianity and Judaism do in a modern society—but how wrong you would be. Peters reminds us that the 19th-century critics of Christian orthodoxy spoke against a privileged institution from a noble—and thus permissible—position of weakness. But Islam in the Netherlands is not in the "position of power" enjoyed by Islam's critics like Wilders (hauled into court), and others, whom Islamists tried to murder, including Ayaan Hirsi Ali (driven from the Netherlands by death threats in 2006); or whom Islamists did murder, like Theo Van Gogh (shot and almost decapitated in 2004) and Pim Fortuyn (gunned down in 2002).

The history of the left's attraction to tyranny is a very old one. Less well appreciated is its attraction to pomposity and pretension, so well illustrated in the Wilders saga. Fashionable academic theory has completely unhinged the best and brightest minds in the West—rendering too many of our elites incapable of thinking clearly about matters of ordinary justice, racism, and democracy, which they fancy they have special expertise to fix. Judge Schalken, Professor Peters, and their like, in Europe and America, are happy to render certain kinds of discussion illegal because of utterly abstract concerns that are real to them only because of dogmas absent-mindedly absorbed from Foucault and his followers. They would be worthier opponents if they were morally suicidal or loathers of European civilization. They're not—they merely enjoy the feeling of superiority to which they believe they are entitled by the argot of anti-essentialism and the social construction of reality. They should be pitied, and also sometimes feared. ♦

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Norman's Conquest

How Norman Podhoretz made it

BY DOUGLAS MURRAY

Biography is more of a trade than an art form. And while the troubles of the trade are legion they are usually squared when the subject of a biography is alive. There are even subgenres with (at the lower end) "unauthorized" blazoned across the jacket, and (at the higher) books like the one Ian Hamilton was forced to write once J.D. Salinger kiboshed his research.

Norman Podhoretz
A Biography
by Thomas L. Jeffers
Cambridge, 408 pp., $35

Fortunately for him, Thomas L. Jeffers has not been forced to do a search for Norman Podhoretz. First because the man himself has, for more than five decades, put his opinions out as widely and publicly as anyone—via *Commentary*, which he so successfully edited, columns in numerous other papers, and celebrated books. Jeffers has an advantage in that his subject is not only alive and still quarrelling, but has made himself available to his biographer in interview and by email. Evolving out of his 2004 compendium *The Norman Podhoretz Reader*, Jeffers is here able to flesh out the narrative of the boy from Brownsville who, through ability and sheer determination, made it finally to be recognized with (among other accolades) the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Jeffers is a thorough and comprehensively knowledgeable guide to his subject. He is also a devotee and, in addition to having access to his subject, has spoken to Podhoretz's family and surviving (in every sense the term is applicable) friends. The resulting work is a tribute and an argument for Podhoretz.

And yet there are problems with arrangements like this. Obviously, there is in Podhoretz a huge amount to admire: Over the course of a lifetime he has held steadfastly to convictions and arguments which made him unpopular with all the right people, and he emerges well from most of these exchanges. In particular we should be grateful to him for making the essential arguments for the West, Israel (particularly through Daniel Patrick Moynihan), and Western culture during a period when efforts to snuff out all three were not only a professional, but a professorial, pursuit.

Yet this book—and, indeed, Pod-

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horetz's reputation—would have greatly benefited from some even mild friendly criticism. Part of the point of successful biography is to view a subject in the round. This is a very hard thing, indeed, when the subject is not merely a hero but alive and cooperating. But it is no disrespect to author or subject to say that there are parts of *Norman Podhoretz* that could have done with a more critical approach.

Allow me a couple of examples. One hundred and twenty-or-so pages in we are told of an event in January 1970 which is, to say the least, odd. Podhoretz is drinking heavily and one day, martini in hand, sees a vision—a kind of diagram—in the sky. Attempting to explain it afterwards he says that, among other things, one realization from it "was that Judaism was true." He claims that, in the aftermath, he possessed the power "like a fortune-teller" to "look at you, and tell what was bothering you and what you should do about it." He says later, "I couldn't do that now, by the way." Nevertheless, "I realized that that was what it must have meant to be a saint or a prophet: someone who never lost the capacity to see into people's souls."

Which must have been nice for him. But what on earth are the rest of us to make of this? Are we to take it at face value, as though magazine editors often have supernatural visions? If it were not for the fact that the incident directly influenced Podhoretz's subsequent beliefs one could, perhaps, pass over it. But leaving it unaddressed in detail (as Jeffers does here) is a disservice to reader and subject.

Another problem emerges with Jeffers's approach to Podhoretz's political stances. Again, not mere acceptance but total agreement strikes me as being, though undoubtedly sincere, a critical mistake. As with anyone who has been so prolific, a few of Podhoretz's writings are now wince-making. The writings on homosexuality, in particular, cannot be taken simply in the manner of their time. Podhoretz appears to believe that there is a class of male who is at great risk of being, as it were, seduced into becoming homosexual while not being inclined that way. Now, one must grant that Fire Island (where Podhoretz had a holiday home and made his observations) in the 1970s would not have been the best place to get a view of a rounded homosexual life. It would be like basing observations about heterosexuality on the behavior of men in strip clubs. Nevertheless the fearfulness, as well as the viciousness, on this subject seems worth exploring. But Jeffers lets it stand.

I don't raise these matters simply to object. And I recognize that writing a biography of a hero, let alone a living one, is tricky. But Podhoretz as a subject deserves to be treated in the round.

Over the course of a lifetime he has held steadfastly to convictions and arguments which made him unpopular with all the right people, and he emerges well from most of these exchanges.

Warts and all. If one grants that Norman Podhoretz is not literally a prophet (and Jeffers seems to be out on this one), then he is still certainly big enough to cope with a more critical treatment.

On the substantial subjects he dealt with, as this book helpfully reminds us, Norman Podhoretz stands at the summit of political writers of his generation. Yet even to say this is to say something which, by the end of Jeffers's work, one suspects might be thought grudging. If there is a reason, it may, I think, come down to a restless streak in Podhoretz which has clearly formed part of his extraordinary drive, and which should have been examined. Writers, intellectuals, thinkers, and artists have always been challenged by the man of action. Either they accept the limitations of their chosen role, or they aspire to something more. On any analysis of his literary and personal style, it seems clear that Podhoretz was never quite happy with simply being a writer—even a great one. Those who just missed out on the First World War often felt this, and Podhoretz was not alone in expressing the feeling after the Second.

However self-aggrandizingly some like to exaggerate the fisticuffs of intellectual struggle, writing is only metaphorical warfare. Only soldiers experience the real fighting. Podhoretz's christening of the war against Islamic fascism as "World War IV" somehow gets to the core here. If there is a reason that calling the Cold War "World War III" has never caught on with the public it is not because, or not in all cases, they do not believe the Cold War to have been real and a threat, but rather because (as with the hotter conflict in which we are now engaged) they sense that the sacrifices in the earlier wars are diminished by such comparisons. Writers of greatness should, of course, take part in the struggles of their time, and it is understandable that many have the instinct to wage kinds of war of their own. But one should, I think, pause and think on the eagerness on finding oneself a couple of World Wars ahead of everyone else.

Norman Podhoretz's life has been not just admirable but important. Not only through his lucid and forceful interventions did Podhoretz help guide some of the political events of his time, he also (principally at *Commentary*) played an important part as a kind of intellectual anchor. By holding fast against the counterculture he managed to sustain values and loyalties which will survive him and, hopefully, us. Against the current of his generation and most of his early friends, Podhoretz thought for himself. And in doing so he made one of the most difficult realizations of his generation.

> I was educated to believe that the *last* thing one ought to be defending was one's own, that it was more honorable and nobler to turn one's back on one's own and fight for others and for other things in which one had no personal stake or interest. This has been a very hard lesson to unlearn, and I am proud to have unlearned it.

It was a lesson which he learned not just for himself but for others: an achievement which, on its own, would put him among the American greats. ♦

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B&A

Only Yesterday

A president remembers what some have forgotten.

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

The president left the White House with abysmal approval ratings, and a war which had begun well—enjoying widespread support and historic resonance—but remained unresolved and unpopular. The keen excitement that attended his successor's arrival only emphasized the rebuke to the president's party and his policies, and doubts about his fitness for the office that had dogged his two terms.

Decision Points
by George W. Bush
Crown, 512 pp., $35

I am referring, of course, to Harry S. Truman, not George W. Bush. And while there is a limit to the parallels that may be drawn between these two distinctly dissimilar men, there are lessons to be drawn from their resemblance as well. Like Bush, Truman was regarded in his time as a lightweight and accidental president: In Truman's case, succeeding the monumental Franklin Roosevelt; for Bush, winning the presidency while narrowly losing the popular vote. Truman's bluntness and lack of finesse made FDR seem all the more eloquent; Bush's plain language and emphatic manner were considered, in certain circles, a national embarrassment.

And yet in retrospect—and in both cases, the interval was not protracted—what had seemed to be weaknesses were, in fact, strengths, and the long-term significance of their tenures in the White House transcended the political arm-wrestling of their day. At the end of World War II, and the dawn of the Cold War, Truman was obliged to make decisions about the course of American foreign policy which proved both smart and successful. A decade after the end of the Cold War, Bush was called upon to mobilize the nation, on sudden notice, for the protracted struggle against Islamist terror.

The substance of *Decision Points* will come as little surprise to students of the second President Bush. Organized in a series of tightly argued, discrete chapters on strategic crossroads in his presidency—the decision to run, to supplant the Taliban and overthrow Saddam Hussein, to establish policy on stem cell research, to contend with Hurricane Katrina, and so on—it bears the hallmark of our first commander in chief with an MBA. However the book was produced, and I am assuming that it was assembled in the manner of presidential memoirs since Dwight Eisenhower, it successfully conveys what we know of the quality and character of George W. Bush, and the sound of his voice. Bush is neither omnipotent nor especially defensive in tone; he admits to mistakes and misgivings, and acknowledges regret and uncertainty. He is careful to explain the principles that informed his actions, and describe the options and dissenting arguments as he reached those decisions. He is, to adapt a famous phrase, fair and balanced.

To be sure, there are minor details that have attracted the attention of the press: the harrowing tale of Barbara Bush's miscarriage, Dick Cheney's offer to resign from the ticket in 2004, the still-pulsating wound of Kanye West's televised assertion that "George Bush doesn't care about black people." But these incidents, insignificant in themselves, serve only to emphasize important impressions that Bush conveys. He is, by his own reckoning, more his mother's son than his father's duplicate; Cheney is a politician of integrity, but a politician as well as a statesman; Bush cares very much about African Americans.

Bush was known to be a brisk and exacting taskmaster in the White House, a quick study with a taste for action when action was called for, and a horror of aimless discourse. That side of his managerial style is obvious here. But as might be expected in a memoir that strives to explain as well as defend, it is interesting to observe the president's varied reactions to problems and incidents, and to appreciate the burdensome detail and dread responsibility of the office.

It is also evident that Bush's religion is neither disingenuous nor apocalyptic: It is a sincere, mainstream Protestantism which, while described in greater detail than this reader might prefer, is well within the confines of presidential experience. *Decision Points* begins with an extended version of his choice to quit drinking at age 40, which clarified the course of his life and made his subsequent history possible. But while Bush is at pains to give credit to his admirable wife and Christian faith for the happy outcome, the incident may also be seen as an impressive exercise in self-examination and self-discipline—a process repeated, more than a few times, in the Oval Office. The determination to defy conventional wisdom and switch course in Iraq in the wake of the 2006 elections would seem to derive from the same inner resolve.

It's too early, by far, to render any meaningful verdict on the Bush presidency. The war on terror is far from won, and his foreign and domestic initiatives—Social Security reform, cultivation of India, the No Child Left Behind Act—remain on the nation's agenda. But just as his successor's travails—or, for that matter, Barack Obama's adoption of Bush's national security strategy—may be seen as vindication in political terms, it may also be argued, after examining the evidence of *Decision Points*, that George W. Bush's presidency was an important presidency, and that Bush, like Truman, rose to the challenge. ♦

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B&A

Hurricane Eleanor

The lives and loves of a medieval matriarch.

BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

Tomb effigy of Eleanor at Fontevraud

ROB MOORE / NEWSCOM

Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204) was, as Ralph V. Turner announces in this thorough and careful biography, "the most famous queen in all the Middle Ages and one of the most infamous women in history." By all accounts a great beauty, she was the wife of two 12th-century monarchs, Louis VII of France (1120-1180) and Henry II of England (1133-1189) in rapid succession, getting along with neither of her husbands in spectacular ways and loathed as a *louche* southern foreigner by her subjects in both countries.

Eleanor of Aquitaine
Queen of France, Queen of England
by Ralph V. Turner
Yale, 416 pp., $35

Eleanor was also the mother of two kings of England: Richard the Lionhearted (1157-1199) and John (1167-1216), he of the Magna Carta. Actually, she was the mother of three English kings, since her second son by Henry (also named Henry) was crowned in 1170, at age 15, during his father's lifetime, as was the custom among the Plantagenets. Henry the Young King, as he was called, did not survive his father, dying in 1183, and so never ruled. In addition, two of Eleanor's three daughters by Henry (among the eight or nine children she bore him) became queen consorts like their mother: Eleanor, who was married off to Alfonso VIII of Castile in 1177, and Joanna, wed with great pomp in Palermo to William II of Sicily in 1176.

Eleanor also acquired what Turner calls "a black legend" among the chroniclers of her era that largely revolved around allegations of adultery, although it also included murder and massive clothing expenditures. (That last aspect of the legend was actually true, supported, as Turner points out, by archival records noting procurements of furs, fine silks, and other extravagant items for Eleanor.) The laundry list of Eleanor's reputed lovers included her paternal uncle Raymond, prince of Antioch, in an affair that supposedly took place while she accompanied Louis to the Holy Land on the Second Crusade in 1147 ("never take your wife along on a crusade," a medievalist friend of mine once quipped); the Muslim prince Saladin, another supposed Syrian acquaintance from the Second Crusade; and assorted troubadours. There was also an alleged attempt on her part to seduce the bishop of Poitiers, a man 40 years her senior.

Turner discounts as baseless gossip all these stories, which started circulating during Eleanor's lifetime and expanded in number and elaboration of detail after her death. They mostly had their origins in monastic chronicles composed long after the supposed events in question, he points out, and monks, especially in England, were notoriously hostile to Henry—and, by extension, his queen—over his role in the 1170 murder of the archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, who was regarded as a saint even during his lifetime. By the 14th century Eleanor was being accused of having murdered Henry's favorite mistress, Rosamund Clifford, and of having been descended from demons.

It was not until the 19th century that historians started trying to rehabilitate Eleanor. Indeed, she is now a favorite of feminist historians who have painted her as a Queen Guinevere out of the chivalric romances that flourished during the 12th century, imposing female gentleness and good manners upon the hyper-masculine knights of the courts where she presided.

Turner is a far more cautious historian, and he has built his biography of Eleanor almost entirely out of 12th-century documents that came directly from her or those who surrounded her: her few surviving letters, her charters, tax rolls, and records of royal expenditures. What these materials show is a woman less interested in adulterous flings, feminist revolutions, or chivalrous mores than in "the pursuit of power," Turner writes. Eleanor, as Turner depicts her, was fiercely devoted to protecting her inherited lands in Aquitaine, to sharing rulership with her two husbands when she could, and to advancing the fortunes of her royal sons. When both her husbands ultimately disappointed her, she reacted ferociously and even self-destructively.

Eleanor's experience with powerful but disappointing men started in her childhood. In terms of size, Aquitaine—the region south of the Loire and west of the Rhône—was the largest single territory in France, and also among the most

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prosperous. Its Atlantic ports, Bordeaux and La Rochelle, were already shipping wine to the rest of Europe. Aquitaine was the oldest part of Roman Gaul, and its residents prided themselves on their cultural superiority to the barbarian Franks of northern France, and on their preservation of Roman civilization through the darkest of the Dark Ages. Most of them spoke Occitan, which is different from French. Politically, however, Aquitaine was a fragmented no-man's land of independent lords who answered to no one but themselves. Eleanor's ancestors were dukes of Aquitaine mostly in name only. What they really were was counts of Poitou, in Aquitaine's far northwest.

Eleanor spent most of her childhood, and most of her adulthood when she returned to visit, in the court at Poitiers, where her grandfather, Duke William IX (1071-1126), cast a long and imposing shadow. William spent his adult life warring against his rebellious nobles, composing amorous and ribald songs (his sobriquet was "the Troubadour"), fighting in the First Crusade (there were four generations of crusaders in Eleanor's family, the last being her son Richard), and being repeatedly unfaithful to his long-suffering wife. Eleanor's mother, Aenor, was the daughter of William's most notorious mistress, to whom William wed his son and heir, William X. Not surprisingly, an aura of Poitevin licentiousness, deserved or no, tainted Eleanor permanently in the eyes of her northern subjects.

William X died in 1137 leaving no male heirs, so Eleanor became duchess of Aquitaine at age 13. She promptly married Louis. (The gold-encrusted rock-crystal vase she brought him from Poitiers as a wedding present is still extant.) As the second son of Louis VI, Eleanor's royal husband had been expected to enter the church like other aristocratic younger sons—until his older brother died in 1131 and his career was hastily redirected toward the throne, which he inherited when his father died a few weeks into his 17-year-old son's marriage. The staid, pious Louis, whose advisers included the famous Cistercian preacher Bernard of Clairvaux and Abbot Suger of St. Denis, pioneer of Gothic architecture, seemed ill-prepared either for wedded bliss or for governing, as he careened between feckless vacillation and bumbling brutality in a range of ecclesiastical and secular disputes.

For a while Louis's lands were under papal interdict after a squabble with Pope Innocent II over filling a vacancy for the post of archbishop of Bourges. Then Louis dragged his army, in 1141, into an unsuccessful attempt to exert control over Toulouse which, as part of Aquitaine, was technically part of his wife's domain but was actually a heavily fortified mini-realm. No sooner did Louis get back from Toulouse, after securing some perfunctory homage from the ruling count, than he got into a bloody two-year war against Theobald II, count of Champagne. Louis's seneschal, Ralph of Vermandois, had become romantically involved with Eleanor's 15-year-old sister, Aelith, or Petronilla, as she was known at the French court.

Of course, the trouble was that Ralph was already married, and for quite some time, to Theobald's niece, also named Eleanor (Ralph was, in fact, old enough to be Petronilla's grandfather). Prodded by his queen, Louis secured an annulment for Ralph from three compliant bishops on grounds of consanguinity—that is to say, overly close cousinage, a common ground for obtaining what was essentially a church-sanctioned divorce. When Innocent II's successor Eugenius III discovered that the annulment had taken place behind his back, he excommunicated Ralph and Petronilla. Louis, meanwhile, had to go to war against the enraged Theobald, a bloody affair that culminated with Louis burning down the church at Vitry, incinerating the thousand or so people who had taken refuge inside.

Louis's next move was to help botch the Second Crusade, the least successful of the four major ventures of Western Europeans into the Holy Land. He first led a disastrous march through Anatolia, in which the Turks destroyed 90 percent of his army. Then, on arriving in Antioch, he refused to accompany Raymond on a rescue mission to Edessa, a Syrian city recently captured by the Turks from the crusaders. Louis insisted, instead, on making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Eleanor, who had sided with her uncle on the Edessa issue—a stance that undoubtedly fueled the gossip that Eleanor and Raymond were having an affair—announced that she intended to have her marriage annulled on the usual ground of consanguinity.

A failed attack on Damascus by Louis stiffened her resolve. Leaving the Holy Land in 1149, the wretched couple sought counsel in Rome from Eugenius. The pope tried to patch it up by forcing Louis and Eleanor into bed together in a papal guest room. The result was Eleanor's second daughter, Alix—but no reconciliation. In March 1152 a French council of bishops declared the marriage null and void. Two months later, Eleanor was married again, to Henry, age 19, nine years her junior and even more closely related to her than Louis had been.

The marriage was a huge political boost to Henry, who was now effectively lord of Aquitaine thanks to his wife. He was also lord of two other French territories, Anjou and Maine, thanks to his mother, Matilda, a granddaughter of William the Conqueror who believed that her cousin Stephen, the reigning king of England, had pushed her off the throne. In 1153 Henry invaded England and secured a promise from Stephen that he would be Stephen's heir. Stephen obligingly died the next year, and Henry became king and also duke of Normandy.

Although technically Louis's vassal, he was now the most powerful man in France. Eleanor was suddenly startlingly fertile with male offspring aplenty (although her eldest son, William, died at age two) and she achieved a kind of political partnership with her youthful husband, acting as regent while he was off battling his own recalcitrant lords in northern England and his new French territories.

Eleanor now had problems of different kinds, however, as the 1160s progressed. Henry, seeking the same kind of centralized rule over his French lands that he expected to enjoy in England, alienated the Poitevin nobility, and his numerous infidelities, especially with the fair Rosamund, likely alienated Eleanor, who, as her childbearing years came to an end, spent increasing

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amounts of time away from her husband. In 1168 her husband installed her as *de facto* ruler of Poitou (and technically of all Aquitaine), although he never quite ceded her full control. Nor would he cede any power whatsoever to Young King Henry, even after the youth's coronation in 1170.

Eleanor managed to get Richard, her favorite son, installed as count of Poitou and duke of Aquitaine in 1172, and another son, Geoffrey, was made future count of Brittany after Henry conquered it in 1166 and betrothed Geoffrey to the reigning count's daughter. Young Henry got not a single castle, even though he was by then married to Margaret, Louis VII's daughter by his second marriage, who had to stay in Paris with her father because she had no proper place to live. Young Henry's filial allegiance gradually shifted from his father to Louis.

Turner argues that Eleanor's real break with her husband, when she began leaving his name out of her charters, took place when Henry started intruding on the integrity of Aquitaine, taking personal homage for Toulouse and promising Gascony as part of his daughter Eleanor's dowry on her betrothal to Alfonso of Castile. In March 1173 the Young King fled to Louis's court, and later that spring Richard and Geoffrey, egged on by Eleanor, joined him in Paris. Uprisings followed all over Henry II's French territories, as well as in northern England, and the king of Scotland marched south. Henry II quashed the rebellions quickly and successfully, and in the fall of 1173 Eleanor decided to flee to—of all people—her former husband, Louis.

She was captured by Henry's troops on the road to Chartres and taken to England the next summer. Henry worked out truces with his three rebellious sons but Eleanor was stripped of her royal powers and the revenues from her lands (although her clothing allowance continued) and more or less shuffled from castle to castle for the next 15 years, not exactly a prisoner but under a sort of house arrest. Young Henry's death, followed by Geoffrey's death in 1186, took place during this long captivity. Meanwhile, Henry II had discussed an annulment from Eleanor (on consanguinity grounds, of course), presumably in order to marry Rosamund; but Rosamund died in 1176 or 1177.

Louis VII died in 1180 and was succeeded by his more tough-minded son, Philip Augustus (1165-1223), who put up a more aggressive fight against Henry's territory-poaching than his father had. Henry, now on the defensive, was gradually worn down physically and mentally by the constant French warfare and the continued disloyalty of his sons. On July 4, 1189, Henry, under pressure from Philip, whose armies had swarmed the Angevin heartland, agreed to name Richard as his heir and do homage to Philip for all his French possessions. He died two days later. Because of the summer heat, his body could not be transported to England for burial, and his final resting place turned out to be Fontevraud Abbey in the Loire Valley, a monastery that had, ironically, been the frequent object of Eleanor's largesse.

One of Richard's first acts as king was to free his mother and secure her enough income to live in her stylish and expensive fashion. She came into her own as a widow and queen mother. Richard left England for the Third Crusade in 1190 and did not return until 1194, having been held for ransom by the German emperor on a trumped-up charge of murder. Eleanor acted as unofficial regent, trying to thwart John's plans to usurp Richard's power and Philip Augustus's plan to conspire with John to keep Richard abroad as long as possible. She raised the money herself, pawning England's crown jewels, to pay Richard's outrageous ransom.

Then she retired to Fontevraud Abbey, only to bestir herself five years later after Richard's death to try to persuade her contentious Poitevin subjects to recognize John, designated as heir by the childless Richard, and to help implement a peace with France by negotiating the wedding of her granddaughter Blanche of Castile (daughter of the younger Eleanor and Alfonso) and Philip Augustus's son, Louis.

Then Eleanor retired again, to Poitiers. Naturally there was still more trouble from John, who had set aside his barren English wife to wed the beautiful Isabelle of Angoulême, who happened to be betrothed to the lord of a powerful Poitevin family. Again, Eleanor had to calm down the Poitevin barons. Still more, and worse, turmoil ensued when Philip Augustus decided to recognize the 15-year-old son of John's late brother Geoffrey as Duke of Aquitaine and put him at the head of an invading force that besieged the castle in Poitou where Eleanor was staying. She wrote John for help, and he personally headed a force that quickly rescued his mother—and imprisoned and killed a number of the enemy.

At that point nearly all of Poitou rose up against the Plantagenets. It was the final disruption of the political world that Eleanor had painstakingly created. She spent her last days at Fontevraud overseeing the construction of the lifelike and masterfully carved tomb sculptures destined to grace the abbey's chapel to this day: her second husband, Henry, somehow reconciled with her in death, her favorite son, Richard, and Eleanor herself. They would be joined by Isabelle of Angoulême on her death.

As Turner writes, "The imposing tombs . . . stand as silent testimony to Eleanor's dedication to the idea of a not purely Plantagenet but also Poitevin empire that she struggled to preserve."

Although Turner's writing is often more workmanlike than stylistically accomplished, and he can be repetitive, this is a fine and thorough study. I have one cavil. Turner regularly generalizes about "the pervasive misogyny of medieval churchmen and intellectuals" and "medieval texts studied by candidates for the clergy" that were "filled with anti-female views." His theory is that Eleanor bucked those views and, hence, made many enemies in an effort to "live her life as she saw fit."

In fact, the 12th century seemed to be relatively kind to women. It was the century of such female luminaries as Hildegard of Bingen (who corresponded with Eleanor), Abelard's learned lover Heloise, and several gifted women poets, including Marie de France, master of medieval romance. It could be said, *contra* Turner, that Eleanor was very much a creature of that extraordinarily creative hundred years. ♦

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B&A

God in the Details

Why disbelieving doesn't always make it so.

BY BARTON SWAIM

"In the matter of belief," writes the Rev. John Ames, the narrator of Marilynne Robinson's justly admired novel *Gilead* (2004), "I have always found that defenses have the same irrelevance about them as the criticisms they are meant to answer. I think the attempt to defend belief can unsettle it, in fact, because there is always an inadequacy in argument about ultimate things." On the evidence of this new book, originally delivered as the 2009 Terry Lectures at Yale, Ames's attitude to apologetics appears to be more or less that of Robinson herself.

Absence of Mind
The Dispelling of Inwardness from the Modern Myth of the Self
by Marilynne Robinson
Yale, 176 pp., $24

In these lectures she takes aim at the claim—*assumption* would be the better word—that human beings are strictly physical organisms, their "minds" nothing more than the functioning of their brains, and that science provides irrefutable evidence for believing that this is so. Her targets are representative: Freud, Comte, Bertrand Russell, Steven Pinker, Daniel Dennett, Richard Dawkins. But she isn't interested in defending Christianity or religion from the attacks of these writers. Her goal is, rather, to suggest that their arguments frequently don't exhibit the kind of rigorous logic they themselves claim for science against religion.

Time and again, in this "parascientific literature," as Robinson calls it, one encounters the idea of a "threshold." In past ages, it's thought, people believed all sorts of hideous nonsense about souls and human nature and divine revelation. *Now we know otherwise*. The temporal placement of the threshold moves around a good bit depending on the author and his agenda—sometimes it's Darwin's *Origin of Species*, sometimes it's Freud or Nietzsche, sometimes it's Watson and Crick's discovery of the structure of DNA—but in each case the threshold means the same thing, namely that "some assumptions were to be regarded as fixed and inevitable and others as exposed for all time and for all purposes as naïve and untenable, supplanted by a better understanding."

Once you give yourself this kind of mental luxury, Robinson argues, your arguments become untethered to evidence and sound reasoning. And it's for that reason that so much of the parascientific, antireligious literature has a curious circularity about it: It's only persuasive if you accept its premises. If you don't, it strikes you as ridiculous and vaguely offensive—but then you must be on the wrong side of the threshold, so it doesn't matter.

Thus Robinson finds Russell and a host of his intellectual descendants writing about "religion" in ways that both fail to define the word and fail to distinguish between religion and the historical contexts in which religion exists. She wonders why Freud's writings have so rarely been interpreted in light of the extraordinary circumstances through which he lived, "as if they have no significant historical context except that provided by Copernicus and Darwin, as if they formed in a weatherless vacuum of some kind, in the pure light of perspicuous intellect." She asks why the concept of a "multiverse" is presented as an argument against the notion that God created the world instead of an argument for the absurdity of treating such a question in purely materialistic terms.

And how is it, Robinson asks, that such highly regarded intellectuals as Daniel Dennett, E.O. Wilson, and Steven Pinker can assume the story of Phineas Gage illustrates what it manifestly doesn't illustrate?

Gage was the railroad worker who, in 1848, survived an accident in which an iron rod pierced his skull. He was reported the following day to have recovered, despite a shattered upper jaw and the loss of an eye. After the accident, though, Gage became (according to contemporary records) "fitful, irreverent, and grossly profane." Dennett, *et al*., suppose that this story illustrates the fact that what we call "character" and "personality" are merely manifestations of physical phenomena in the brain, of no more moral or spiritual import than any other physical trait. And yet it never occurs to any of these writers that a man who suffers sudden disfigurement and the loss of an eye may reasonably be expected to become profane and irritable.

Robinson's intention throughout is to challenge the assumption, so deeply ingrained within modern thought, that "the experience and testimony of the individual mind is to be explained away, excluded from consideration when any rational account is made of the nature of human being and of being altogether." It's this assumption that allows a certain kind of intellectual to bypass thousands of years of human thought and to explain, with the knowing air of a pubescent boy, why it is that people think what they think and do what they do.

One of the best things about the literature of the New Atheists is that, for all the supercilious question-begging, it has provoked a number of highly literate and memorable responses. This is one of them. ♦

Barton Swaim is the author of Scottish Men of Letters and the New Public Sphere: 1802-1834.

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B&A

The Tehran Syndrome

What happens when a mind is held hostage by the imams. **BY SOHRAB AHMARI**

Schoolgirls outside the former American embassy, Tehran, 2010

One of the more amusing anecdotes related here by Hooman Majd involves a preelection conversation between the author and a deputy minister for science. Majd, an Iranian-American journalist with close ties to the Green Movement leadership, pointedly questions the Ahmadinejad appointee about his government's decision to cap bandwidth speeds across the country at a slow 128 kilobytes per second. The deputy minister responds sternly that the cap simply reflects the Iranian cultural context: "We like to pay visits to each other, to drop in and chat with our friends and family, to see one another's faces."

Who needs Facebook when we have the tea room?

The Persian blogosphere is estimated to be the world's fourth largest. When permitted by the regime, Iranians are avid YouTube, Twitter, and SMS users. Majd naturally rejects the minister's invocation of cultural relativism to mask repression. "The matter of the Internet . . . is purely one of control, not culture," he rightly concludes. It is a shame, then, that his book reacts to recent developments in Iran with the same basic intellectual reflex as the hardline theocrat tackling the foreign menace of Internet access.

The Ayatollahs' Democracy
An Iranian Challenge
by Hooman Majd
Norton, 282 pp., $26.95

Much of *The Ayatollahs' Democracy* is devoted to a garden-variety defense of Iran's nuclear program and aggressive foreign policy under Ahmadinejad. More provocatively, however, the book advances the thesis that the Islamic Republic of Iran forms the basis of a democratic order reflecting the broad consensus of a devoutly Shia and Persian polity—some recent "excesses" notwithstanding. To make this case, Majd relies on a number of fascinating personal vignettes. What is remarkable about many of these is precisely the extent to which they tend to undermine his own characterization of the Iranian political system.

Take, for example, one of Majd's many get-togethers with his relative by marriage, former President Mohammad Khatami. The two are happily drinking tea when Majd broaches the topic of politics. Suddenly, "Khatami pauses and then waves one hand toward the ceiling and the walls, and says, 'You know how it is.' . . . His offices are thoroughly bugged, his every conversation monitored, his every movement tracked." Majd's tea room meeting with the son of the reformist-leaning Friday prayer leader of the city of Yazd is also monitored, this time by ominous security agents visible across the tea room. The latter incident occurred prior to the 2009 election and subsequent crackdown.

In the face of these police-state encounters, Majd resorts to some remarkable intellectual contortions to present the Islamic Republic as a democracy. He goes to painstaking lengths to distinguish the repressive "Ahmadinejad regime" from the benevolent "Iranian republic" and its (supposedly) democratic ideals and institutions. The republic has always had a repressive apparatus, Majd concedes, but it is only the Ahmadinejad regime which has put it to *really bad* use—a claim belied by the summary executions of thousands of dissidents during the first decade of the Islamic Republic.

Majd also attempts, unsuccessfully, to present Iranian politics as similar to those in any other democracy by carelessly applying labels like "left," "right," "liberal," and "conservative" to a system that defies these familiar coordinates. Conscious of his target audience's politics, Majd often compares the Iranian president to George W. Bush, casting both as provincial conservatives intolerant of dissenting views. Say what you will about Dubya, but "Not My President" bumper stickers never landed American liberals in jail. In Iran, a "Not My President" bumper sticker market is unlikely to survive—literally.

While the Bush/Ahmadinejad comparison marks a cheap attempt to appeal to Western leftists, the parallels Majd draws between the Iranian political system and America's are perverse. Every

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BEHROUZ MEHRI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES / NEWSCOM

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election cycle, Iran's Guardian Council bars candidates for the presidency unless they are male, Shia, and possess irreproachable revolutionary credentials.

To dress up theocracy as democracy, Majd turns to some unattractive yes-buttery here: Yes, the Guardian Council prevents thousands of otherwise qualified individuals from running for office on political, ethno-sectarian, and gender-based grounds, he concedes; but don't the media play the same role here in the United States by targeting candidates who are outside the American mainstream? This sophomoric argument raises the question: Are Iranian women, who make up half of the electorate and more than half of university graduates, not "mainstream" enough for Iran?

Then again, faced with such political conundrums, Majd always has the concept of the "Ayatollahs' democracy" to fall back on—though he pointedly never defines the term with precision. Instead he relies on a repetitive series of synonyms to describe Iran's political system: "Islamic democracy," "Islamic 'democracy,'" "religious democracy," "Shia Islamic democracy," "Iranian democracy," "Persian democracy"—and so on. The vagueness appears deliberate:

> Islamic democracy ... is possible because there are republican aspects of Islam and Islamic aspects of republicanism, such as respect for and protection of the rights of the people, and the ability of the people to choose their leaders. That's far too vague to be a description of a political system, and one that melds theology with governance, but perhaps it's that vagueness—and the anomalous nature of the Ayatollahs' democracy—that has allowed its survival this long.

Or perhaps it is the brutal efficiency of Evin Prison. Fear, not opacity, has been the backbone of Iran's dictatorship—or rather, the "Ayatollahs' Persian-Shia-Islamic-Iranian democracy."

Using these ethno-sectarian predicates allows Majd to pretend that Iran is a democracy even when the regime callously disregards the most basic democratic norms. Just as Persian culture demands slow Internet speeds, Persian democracy needs a robust dose of authoritarianism. *The Ayatollahs' Democracy* thus feeds into an embarrassing Western intellectual tradition of fetishizing Khomeinism, dating back to Michel Foucault's early embrace of the 1979 revolution. Today, romanticizing the Iranian regime as a culturally appropriate "democratic" order allows uncomfortable Western audiences to avoid confronting a dictatorial reality that spells injustice in any language.

And yet, because of the glaring inconsistency between its on-the-ground reportage and political analysis, *The Ayatollahs' Democracy* invites esoteric reading. The book's first section, which recounts the events of the 2009 election through the eyes of regime officials and Green leaders, is structured like a play in two acts with an *entr'acte* and listing of *dramatis personae*. Each scene in this play is punctuated by variations on the 11th-century Persian mystic Hassan-i Sabbah's enigmatic pronouncement (popularized by Nietzsche and William S. Burroughs) that "nothing is true; everything is permitted." Perhaps Majd is asking his audience to read between the lines. After all, as an American-based journalist, he holds a visa from the ayatollahs' bureaucrats that would be at risk should he draw the obvious conclusions.

Regardless of any ironic hidden message, Majd's theatrical form ultimately comes off as a feeble attempt to add literary verve to trite apologetics, a style reinforced by a Warholesque dust jacket and the slang and vulgarity interlaced throughout the book (when it comes to foreign policy, Majd appreciates the fact that Ahmadinejad's Iran has "balls").

So why does an independent journalist and son of a Shah-era diplomat apologize for a system that so mercilessly victimizes Iranian dissidents? It is tempting to psychoanalyze Hooman Majd or to think him desperate to maintain his remarkable access to the regime's establishment. But Majd has yet another escape hatch: Just as the regime practices a unique, culturally centered form of "democracy," Majd has pioneered a unique form of independent journalism. Call it Ayatollahs' Analysis. ♦

B&A

Ghost's Story

...And the Pulitzer Prize for biography goes to Theodore Sorensen!

BY MICHAEL J. BIRKNER

Did John F. Kennedy really write *Profiles in Courage*? It's a question that has been on the table ever since Kennedy won the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1957, and with the death of Theodore Sorensen—Kennedy's able speechwriter—the issue of authorship has again surfaced. It's an appropriate time to add new elements to an old story.

For years, Sorensen stoutly denied he'd composed *Profiles in Courage*, a study of eight senators who defied public opinion by taking unpopular stands on controversial issues, ranging from crusading against slavery to the Senate vote on removing a president to opposing the Nuremburg trials. Several scholars, including the Kennedy biographer Herbert Parmet, have offered compelling evidence that the book was actually composed by a committee, with Kennedy at most dictating certain paragraphs and editing copy to suit his sensibility. But with Sorensen consistently coy about his role, Parmet's digging seems to have had little influence on the basic question. Nor did Sorensen's 2008 autobiography, conceding he "helped choose the words" of many sentences, do much to change the storyline.

Before his death, Sorensen admitted more of the truth: He was, indeed,

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the main author of *Profiles*. In an interview conducted by a *New York Times* writer for use in his obituary, Sorensen confessed that he had drafted "most of the chapters" (as the obituary writer put it) or, as Sorensen said, "played an important role" and gotten handsomely recompensed for doing so. "So what?" historian Richard Bernstein suggested shortly after Sorensen died, and scholars began debating the issue on the Internet. The model of authorship, says Bernstein, was not the standard scholar's way of writing a book; but Kennedy was involved throughout, much as judges supervise their clerks in writing legal opinions, and politicians hire ghostwriters to produce their memoirs and write books under their name.

The proper response to this cavalier defense of John F. Kennedy is to recapitulate what Kennedy actually did—and to ask whether the Pulitzer Prize has ever been awarded to any other author who had as little to do with the substantive production of a book as Kennedy did. It is also worth noting that the winner of a prestigious prize should not be judged by the same standards as a soon-to-be-discarded book on public affairs might be.

John F. Kennedy, Theodore Sorensen, 1960

PAUL SCHUTZER / TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

It is difficult to say precisely how *Profiles* was composed, but we have enough documentary evidence to suggest the following. First, Kennedy hatched the idea and shared it with at least two writers, his young aide Sorensen and Jules Davids, a diplomatic historian at Georgetown whose teaching had impressed Kennedy's new wife, Jacqueline. Both were given the assignment of writing portions of the book, and each was paid for the assignment. Sorensen, by the evidence I have seen, wrote more of the book and was recompensed far more handsomely than Davids.

According to Parmet, Kennedy tried writing the chapter on John Quincy Adams but quickly bogged down in minutiae, read the drafts produced by his ghosts, marked them up, and then sent them out to other historians—notably two of the most influential scholars of the day, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. at Harvard and Allan Nevins at Columbia. Nevins appears to have received the document in a late form, after a number of Sorensen rewrites and Kennedy edits. Based on my own research in the Nevins papers at Columbia, he was asked by Kennedy to read nine of the book's 11 chapters and make pertinent comments, including "frank criticism, comment and suggestions" on substance and style. (Kennedy subsequently forwarded the first and final chapters of the book for Nevins's review.) Impressed that a busy senator should be able to produce such work, Nevins was effusive with his praise while working to correct errors of context and fact, and smooth the prose out yet further. His work on the manuscript was acknowledged by Kennedy in *Profiles in Courage*, who subsequently rewarded Nevins with White House honors and minor diplomatic assignments. It is possible that Arthur Schlesinger and two other leading scholars (Walter Johnson at the University of Chicago and Arthur Holcombe at Harvard) performed a similar service, since they are also named in Kennedy's acknowledgments.

Based on his research at the Kennedy presidential library, Robert Dallek argues that Kennedy dictated "final chapter drafts" based on the materials he had accumulated from his ghostwriters and the historians who had reviewed and edited what they assumed were drafts that Kennedy himself had composed. Exactly how much Kennedy contributed to drafts others composed and edited is not known.

In 1956 *Profiles in Courage* was published to considerable popular and critical success. It was serialized in the *New York Times Magazine*, praised in reviews across the country, and nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, ultimately winning despite being neither the Pulitzer jury's first or second choice. (It had recommended Alpheus T. Mason's biography of Harlan Fiske Stone for the biography prize.) Had the Pulitzer board known or even suspected that Kennedy was, at best, a collaborator in the writing of *Profiles in Courage*, it is impossible to imagine his winning; but those were less cynical times. The fact that Kennedy possessed a Harvard degree, had published a previous book (*Why England Slept*) about events leading to World War II, and that he seemed thoughtfully conversant with historical issues, gave credibility to the authorship he claimed.

Surely, it does no credit to Kennedy that, in the subsequent controversy over authorship, he consistently lied about his role in producing *Profiles*, and about Sorensen's responsibility for it. Moreover, Kennedy, assisted by Clark Clifford, got Sorensen to issue a false affidavit denying columnist Drew Pearson's assertion on an ABC television program that Sorensen was the main author of *Profiles in Courage*.

Because of his early, tragic death, combined with his undoubted charisma and accomplishments in office, John F. Kennedy today is something of a secular saint in American politics. He is consistently ranked very high among presidents in public (as opposed to scholarly) polls, and his soaring rhetoric moved a generation. But none of Kennedy's wit, political sagacity, or glamour should obscure a basic fact that Theodore Sorensen's death has now confirmed: Kennedy did not write *Profiles in Courage*. He simply took credit for it. ♦

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"Poland has rejected the idea of an informal G6 of the European Union's largest members, suggested by Italy to address its worries about Franco-German dominance of the EU, in a sign of its unwillingness to jeopardise Warsaw's close ties with Berlin." —Financial Times, *November 7, 2010*

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Italy creates separate, 'more easygoing' union

'Party' members include Monaco, Mallorca, Ibiza

By Guy Dinmore in Rome

In an attempt to squelch a brewing controversy over plans to create a separate union, the Italian government today issued a clarification: "We didn't intend to sow dissent within the ranks," said foreign minister Franco Frattini. "We love our European Union and our dependence on a single currency and having to ask Brussels, Paris, and Berlin for permission to use the bathroom. We truly meant no offense to our German friends or their Polish lackeys." He further explained that all his country wants is closer cooperation within a subgroup of "like-minded, fun-loving states." Thus far, Italy's informal union includes Monaco and the Spanish-controlled islands of Mallorca and Ibiza.

Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi is planning to hold summit meetings lasting several weeks in each of the new member states.

Silvio Berlusconi looks forward to hosting a SBARRO summit in Ibiza. AP IMAGES

"No hassles, no fuss, and definitely no plenary sessions," Mr. Berlusconi told Italy's RAI television. "There will certainly be discussions of economic cooperation. The settings, however, will be informal, on verandas overlooking the sea and at discos like Amnesia, where I have VIP status." Indeed, the prime minister expressed his country's willingness to provide assistance to the other member states. He and his advisers have dubbed the group "Silvio Berlusconi's Aid-Related Regional Organization," also known as SBARRO.

All of which has left the rest of the European Union baffled. "What kind of a union is that?" asked German foreign minister Guido Westerwelle. "It makes no sense. I would have pictured Italy's new group to include Albania, Libya, and Abyssinia," he told FT with a chuckle. Meanwhile, French president Nicolas Sarkozy scoffed at the very notion of SBARRO. "[Berlusconi] wants us to take him seriously. But how can anyone take SBARRO seriously? From a distance, it all seems enticing. But upon further inspection, you discover it is a place of mediocrity—pretending to be something that it's clearly

Continued on Page A6

Biden heads 'missile launch' investigation
Suspects include Chinese, Atlanteans

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